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LUCY ARLYN.

BY

J. T. TROWBRIDGE,

AUTHOR OF "NEIGHBOR JACKWOOD," "CUDJO'S CAVE," "FATHER
BRIGHTHOPES," ETC., ETC.



BOSTON:
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I.

THE VILLAGE GENIUS.



IT was a proud day for Archy Brandle and his mother when Lucy Arlyn came out to their house to make a friendly visit and to drink tea.

The sun seemed to shine more brightly and the birds to sing more sweetly for her sake, that afternoon. For her the widow put on her handsomest white cap; for her the nicest tea-things were produced; and for her the widow's son, in the little workshop at the kitchen-end, made extravagant flower-boxes, and devotedly hammered his thumb.

The shop itself was a mere box, filled with grotesque rubbish, — dog-carts, dog-harnesses, and dog-churns; cog-wheels without number; a wooden horse without legs; a native hand-organ, and a hickory fiddle, with other extraordinary and unmentionable trumpery; in the midst of which toiled the genius of the place, with sweaty cheeks and rolled-up sleeves, at his work-bench by the window.

On the threshold of the shop-door sat Lucy, watching Archy at his work, or looking out upon the pleasant orchard ; but always, whatever else she did, charming away the young man's heart with those tender hazel eyes and soft brown curls, on which the checkered sunshine flickered.

The tea ready, Mrs. Brandle came smilingly to announce it. Lucy was lost in revery at the moment ; her eyes, full of dreams, gazing farther away than Archy or the orchard : but she looked up quickly, and shook her sunny curls.

"Why, Mrs. Brandle," she said, "you never told me what a genius our Archy is!"

The simple widow regarded the awkward and blushing youth with a look full of fondness and maternal pride.

"He takes arter his father, Miss Arlyn. His father was a master-hand to be always contrivin' somethin' or other no mortal ever thought on. Ever sence Archy was a baby, he has been jes' so famous for putterin' ; and there's no end to the time he has spent and the property he has destroyed folerin' his bent."

"Oh, pshaw!" said Archy modestly : "I ain't so bad as that!"

"He has been telling me about his flying-machine," said Lucy ; "and he has promised me a ride in it, if he can ever get it to go. Only think of flying, Mrs. Brandle!"

Archy grinned, and turned over a flower-box to hide his blushes.

"I consider it a good idee myself," remarked the widow.

“ Archy’s idees are gener’ly good. The trouble is, he can’t always make ’em work jest to suit him. There was his improved clo’es-dryer : it was a very good idee ; and I thought a great deal on’t, till it fell into the fire one day, and burnt up a hull week’s washin’. His new lever pump was very ingenious ; but then he never could make it pump arter he got it into the well. Then there was his Yankee cutting-box : he cut off two fingers in that ” —

“ Come, don’t tell about that ! ” interposed Archy, putting one hand behind him.

“ While he was laid up with his hand,” continued the widow, good-humoredly laughing in sympathy with their visitor, “ he studied up a dog-churn to save labor.”

“ Don’t mention that thing ! ” pleaded Archy.

“ Oh, yes ! ” cried Lucy, delighted. “ How did the dog-churn succeed ? ”

“ He worked long enough at it to churn all the butter in town one season ! ” said the good woman, glad to entertain her guest, even at the risk of annoying her beloved Archy. “ Then it took him a month to train Carlo.”

“ Wal, such a stupid dog as that ! ”

“ Finally he got him perty well larnt : but, when he was in the churn, somebody had to stand by and whip him all the time to make him go ; and you know it wouldn’t be my way to do that, when I could take hold and bring the butter enough sight quicker myself. One mess, Carlo was two days churnin’ ; the next he e’t up when my back was turned ; and,

when Archy insisted on tryin' him agin, he tipped the churn over, and made the awfulest muss, — got the cream all over him, and run with it all over the house !” —

Here Archy took to flight, and left Lucy suffocating with laughter.

“ I believe,” said the widow, wiping away tears of merriment from her eyes with her apron, “ I come to call you to tea ; but you got me to talkin', and I never know when to stop. Poor boy ! he can't bear to hear about that dog-churn !”

She led the way to the kitchen, where the tea-table was set, and a detachment of sunbeams from the waving pear-branches by the window danced like a troop of fairies on the white cloth and cheery dishes of the little banquet, of which they had playfully taken possession in her absence.

There was the little tea-tray in its place, where many and many a time, for years, it had graced the board at which she and her lamented husband sat down, until the sight of its worn japan and battered rim was dearer to the widow's eyes than the gayest salver would have been, all of silver or gold.

Mrs. Brandle brought the little black tea-pot from the hearth, and placed it upon the tray. Beside it were three white cups and three white saucers, set into each other, and covered by a snowy napkin. There was an old-fashioned sugar-bowl standing by an old-fashioned milk-mug, both looking like an aged married couple that had lived together happily for a great while, and were quite contented. Then there were the brightest knives in the village, for Mrs. Brandle was

a famous scourer ; one by each plate, like a sword under the rim of a shield. One of the fairy sunbeams had the audacity to dance upon the very edge of one of these shining blades. Others of the merry troop were capering upon the slices of white bread, the golden butter, and the dishes of cookies and preserves. There was a great fluttering among the intruders when the company sat down ; the pear-branches rustling to give them warning. About half of them ventured to remain on the table, while the rest flew to Archy's head, on which they played fantastically, as if leaping and clapping their hands with glee at his grinning bashfulness.

With the beautiful and admired Luey sitting opposite him, talking and laughing with the most graceful condescension, the village genius could only look at her and listen to her, and blush and stammer when she looked at him. It is not probable that he had any distinct consciousness of tasting food that night, or was even aware that he stirred his tea with his knife, ate sauce with his fingers, and bread and butter with a spoon.

While the youth's cup of bliss was mixed half and half with painful diffidence, his mother's overflowed with unalloyed happiness. She knew how ardently Archy loved Luey, and felt a warm hope that Luey had become interested in him. The young girl's occasional fits of abstraction, pensiveness, and sighs, were undoubted symptoms of love ; and who so likely to be the object of her affection as that paragon of excellence and prodigy of talent, the widow's darling son ?

Poor Mrs. Brandle did not consider that nobody else ever saw with a mother's eyes, but thought only of the joy of having so sweet a companion sitting there at every meal, rendering unspeakably happy Archy, who worshipped her so, and filling the house with the charm of her loveliness.

The widow resolved to give her son some practical advice on the subject before he set out to escort Lucy home; and accordingly followed him to the workshop when he went to get the flower-boxes.

“Now is your chance, my son!” she whispered.

“My chance?” repeated Archy, with an earnest, hopeful look.

“Yes, my son. Remember the old adage, — ‘Happy’s the wooing that’s not long a-doing.’”

“Ô ma! you don’t mean” —

“Come, you musn’t be bashful now,” — the widow smiled encouragingly. “Be bôld as a lion. Tell her you love her!”

“I dasn’t!” said the agitated Archy. “Don’t seem as though I ever could mention it to her! But I do!” — and the tears came into his eyes.

“You musn’t cry and appear down-hearted. Chirk up, my son. Remember the old saying, — ‘Be as merry as you can; for love ne’er delights in a sorrowful man.’ You don’t know the natur’ o’ these gals as well as I do.”

“But you don’t re’lly think, though, she’s any notion arter me, do ye?”

“ I’m satisfied on’t, ehild ! I can tell ! But she never’ll have you in the world if you hang baek in this way. Now, don’t you leave her to-night till you’ve popped the question.”

“ Oh, if I only das’t to ! ” replied Archy. “ Sposen anybody should hear ? ”

“ Watch your chance, my son. It’ll be a good time when you’re goin’ over the bridge. If anybody happens along, you can kind o’ throw a stun into the water, and make believe you see a mud-turtle or somethin’, and so have an excuse to stop. She ain’t a bit happy there to hum with her Aunt Pinworth’s folks ; and I hain’t a doubt but she’ll jump at the chance to come and live here. Now, promise you’ll do as I say.”

Archy promised, although with fear and trembling ; and the widow returned to the kitchen in order to speak a few words in praise of her son, and prepare Luey’s mind for what was coming.

“ He’s got jest one of the best dispositions under the sun, Miss Luey ; and we’re jest as happy as we can be here together, as you see. But I suppose we sha’n’t always live alone. ‘ Wives must be had, be they good or bad,’ says the proverb. I hope Archy will git a good one ; for he deserves one, if anybody does in this world ! ”

“ Indeed he does ! ” said the sympathizing Lucy, not suspecting the artful mother’s design.

“ ‘ Little farm well tilled, little house well filled, little wife well willed,’ — that’s Archy’s idee. He’ll make jest the

most indulgentest husband now, Lucy," continued the widow, growing familiar; when Archy, entering with the flower-boxes, put an end to the eulogy.

Lucy praised the workmanship of the boxes, but regretted that he had put by his flying-machine to make them; assuring him that she could never repay his kindness.

"Oh! mabby you can, some way." And Archy gave his mother an inquiring look, wondering if it would not be better to make his declaration then, when she was present to help it through.

But Mrs. Brandle motioned him to go. Lucy was already at the door, appearing anxious to depart. Archy sidled up to her with an embarrassed air; his mother smiling encouragement, and putting out her elbow to imply that he ought to offer her his arm. It was a moment of extreme trial to the suffering genius.

"Take my arm?" he faltered; at the same moment dropping one of the flower-boxes. Stooping to pick that up, he dropped the other; and, looking hastily to see if Lucy was laughing at him, he dropped them both.

"Thank you, Archy," said Lucy with a smile: "you have your hands full, and I can take care of myself." And, bidding the widow good-by, she walked away gracefully beside the humiliated and red-faced youth.

Mrs. Brandle watched them with eyes of fond solicitude until they disappeared from sight over the hill against the sunset sky; then returned to the kitchen and her work, smil-

ing at visions of her son's successful wooing and happy wedded life.

The breezes sank to rest with the sun. The mill-pond was unruffled, reflecting in its dreamy bosom the cool green banks, motionless and drooping elms, the far-off purple hills, and fiery evening sky. Lucy, gay and sociable at starting, grew thoughtful and silent as she approached her home. Archy almost gasped for breath, coming in sight of the bridge below the dam, and remembering his mother's injunction. He did not have to resort to the device of throwing a stone at some imaginary reptile ; for, reaching the bridge, Lucy stopped by the rail, and looked down at the swift-running water.

A stream speaks many languages, and can discourse of mirth and sadness, of love and despair, equally well, — flowing forth frolicsome and bubbling with laughter at morning ; murmuring of liquid coolness and sweet rest under the noonday heats ; hoarse and melancholy at nightfall ; uttering solemn things and dread uncertainties at midnight with mysterious moan ; the same unchanging and perpetual strain, interpreting to every season its sentiment, and to every heart its own joy or sorrow. Archy and Lucy stood together on the bridge, the waters rushing over shadowy shallows beneath them ; and it talked of love and trouble to both : yet it spoke one thing to the simple youth, and to the maiden far other things, — hopes and sufferings and yearnings which he could never understand.

“ Who was that for ? ” asked Archy as she sighed.

“For you, Archy,” she playfully answered, faintly smiling, and wondering to think how far the youth was from her, and how near another was, at that moment.

“You don’t say — you don’t mean that?” exclaimed the genius. “It was for Abner Roane, wasn’t it?”

Lucy smiled at his breathless earnestness, but shook her head.

“Abner has red hair: I never could sigh for red hair, Archy!”

Archy sifted sand through a crack of the bridge with his foot, not knowing what next to say. The sand spilled into the stream; and the stream talked on the same, wild and dark, and prophetic of griefs, yet far different griefs, to both.

Archy had to think of all his mother had said to him before he could gain courage to add, —

“If I re’lly thought that was for me, I — I should feel I was the luckiest feller: the flyin’-machine wouldn’t be a circumstance!”

“Nonsense, Archy!” laughed his companion; but his face was full of emotion that surprised and touched her. “Ah, Archy!” she said, laying her hand kindly upon his shoulder, “you are an honest boy, and you have a good heart, if you are not very smart! We will always be good friends!”

The serious shades of evening closing around, together with what the water said to her, had softened her eyes and voice to a strange tenderness, which Archy hoped was tenderness for him. “I *do* love you!” he burst forth, his eyes glistening

with honest tears. "I can't help it, and I may as well mention it; though I know I ain't any thing that you should care for me!" And down went the flower-boxes on the bridge, and down got Archy to pick them up; where, finding himself on his knees in a convenient posture, he remained to plead his cause.

"There, there, Archy! get up quick!" cried Luey; and as he scrambled to his feet, thinking somebody was coming, she once more laid her gentle and consoling hand upon his shoulder. "Never do such a thing, nor think of such a thing, again, Archy!"

"I knowed you wouldn't have me, or I might have knowed!" said the wretched genius, hanging his head. "Don't be put out 'cause I mentioned it: I won't agin. I know I'm a fool!"

"And so you are, dear, good Archy!" said Luey, in a tone so full of sympathy and pity, that the poor fellow, quite overcome, burst into tears. "Come, now, cheer up, Archy: let us be friends as before."

"I'll always be your friend, if you'll let me!" exclaimed Archy. "I'll do any thing for you; only let me know if ever you wa-want me" — chokingly over his sleeve.

She waited for him to dry his tears, talking to him cheeringly; then said she would see how much he was willing to do for her.

"I've a letter I want you to carry," — taking one from her bosom.

“ O, I’ll — I’ll carry it ! ” said the eager Archy.

“ I don’t want anybody to know about it : for that reason, I trust you with it,” Lucy added, placing it in his hand. “ Carry it ” — in a faint voice — “ to Guy Bannington ! ”

Archy recoiled, holding the letter from him.

“ Why, Archy, won’t you take it ? ”

“ O Lucy ! ” he murmured, with a look of astonishment and distress. “ Guy Bannington ! — that bad young man ! ”

“ What do *you* know about Guy Bannington ? ” cried Lucy, irritated. “ Give me back the letter ! ”

“ I’ll carry it, if you say so : only, you know, he’s the wust young man in the county, everybody says.”

“ And what everybody says you believe, simpleton ! ” said Lucy impatiently. “ Give it to me ! ”

“ No ; I’ll take it : I said I would. But why didn’t you tell us what you come over to our house for ? ”

“ Why, Archy, what do you mean ? ”

“ ’Cause, I know now, you don’t care no more for ma or me than noth’n ; and you never would have come if’t hadn’t been for gittin’ me to carry this letter.”

Lucy blushed crimson ; for the simple genius, out of the anguish of his soul, as geniuses are said to do, had spoken the living truth.

“ Very well ! ” said Lucy coldly ; “ if you think so, you will never wish to see me again : and I cannot keep the boxes, nor let you carry the letter.”

“ Now, don’t be put out ! ” implored the widow’s son, quite

crushed by her resentment. "I didn't mean it. 'Tain't none of my business who you write to. You know better'n I do 'bout Guy; for you're enough sight smarter'n I be, I know!" And he entreated so earnestly to be permitted to show his devotion by conveying the missive, that Lucy could not well refuse him had she wished to.

"Good-night, then, Archy. I can go alone the rest of the way, and carry the boxes." And, dismissing him with a kind word he never forgot, she lingered there in the shadows on the bridge, listening to the prophetic waters; while Archy hurried away, clasping tight the letter, and blistering it with his tears.

II.

ARCHY'S ADVENTURES.



BACK through the village went the discarded lover on his miserable errand.

Up a long, lonesome road he turned, over the hills. A clear moon shone in the heavens; the village below him lay deep down in the dewy valley; while, before him, solemn mountains lifted their silent crags in the misty distance.

A group of Lombardy poplars, away on the left, reared their gloomy tops above the surrounding foliage, and guided Archy to the house he was to visit. The poplars fronted a cross-road, and bordered an avenue leading up to a large brown mansion-house in the midst of shady grounds. Over sleeping fruit-trees and still garden-walks lay the white mantle of the moonshine: a fountain trickled musically somewhere, not far off; and, all around, the air was fragrant with the breath of flowers.

Poor Archy's heart swelled with a tumult of conflicting emotions as he walked in among the great gloomy poplars, bearing Lucy's letter. There in that fine house lived her

lover, heir to all this magnificent estate : what was he, then, a poor widow's son, ever to think of loving her ? But Guy was a wild youth, and her intercourse with him was secret ; and maybe he would break her heart, as it was said he had broken more than one poor heart before : thinking of which, Archy's soul was filled with bitterness and burning jealousy ; and he felt, in his hatred of Guy, that he could bind him to his flying-machine (if it was only finished), and send him up into eternal clouds, without mercy.

As he approached, however, his hate was changed to fear. He had always felt an instinctive dread of grand folks generally, and of the Banningtons in particular. The colonel was a terrible man, with frightful paralytic limbs ; and Guy was a reckless fellow, who kept a number of large fierce dogs, which Archy looked and hearkened for now, pausing among the poplars with thrills of terror.

But the dogs were chained in their kennels that summer night. No savage growl or sudden onset of wolfish brutes leaping out from shadowy places threatened the timorous letter-bearer. He hastened to a side-door, where he saw a light, and was admitted by the housekeeper. He had escaped the dogs ; but now Guy, scarcely less formidable, was to be confronted.

In a small library-room, furnished with richly carved book-cases, the walls hung with pictures, and fantastically adorned with implements and insignia of war and sport, — horse-pistols, foils, rifles, spurs, a short sword, a long sword, a mili-

tary sash and plume, — in a great arm-chair luxuriantly reposing, a cigar in his mouth, wreaths of smoke about his head, and a book lying open in the lamplight beside him, Archy found his dreaded rival.

A well-proportioned youth, with a broad, shapely head covered by a mass of carelessly tossed, wavy brown hair; eyebrows strong, and beautifully arched; blue eyes; imperious mouth; decidedly a sanguine and impetuous temperament, but by no means so wicked-looking as Archy's imagination had pictured him, — such was the proud and ill-reputed Guy.

Archy, who had expected to be met by haughtiness and scorn, was almost charmed into admiration by the youth's easy politeness and radiant manner; but, when he saw the expression of triumphant joy that shone in his handsome face as he ran his eye over the letter, his bitterness and burning jealousy returned, and he glared at him darkly from a corner.

“Archibald is your name?” cried the pleasant Guy.

“Yessir,” muttered Archy.

“Archibald, I thank you ever so much: give me your hand.”

Archy would have put out his hand; but he saw that Guy's had money in it, and he shrank back.

“I didn't come over here for pay. I come to please Miss Arlyn.”

“I like you the better for that. But you won't refuse a little present.” And, returning the money to his pocket, Guy

took from the desk a splendid pocket-knife, with a diversity of blades, which fascinated the eye of the genius, and proved too great a temptation to be resisted.

Archy accepted the gift, therefore, and departed : but, all the way back, the memory of Guy's radiant face tortured his soul ; and the knife weighed heavier and heavier in his conscientious pocket, until, arrived in sight of his mother's cottage, he plucked it forth, and angrily threw it into a clump of sumachs by the fence.

The sound of a foot on the iron scraper aroused the widow as she sat knitting and waiting ; and, with tears of hope and fondness beaming in her eyes, she sprang to meet her son. His prolonged absence had been to her convincing evidence of the success of his suit. She saw Luey smile sweetly as she accepted him ; and for the last two hours she had imagined the happy lovers seated familiarly side by side on the sofa in Mrs. Pinworth's parlor, exchanging tender confidences, and laying plans for the future. What else could keep him so long ? And now, candle in hand, she smilingly opened the door to welcome and congratulate him.

“ Well, my son ! what's the good news ? ” she fondly asked as Archy staggered in.

The genius made no answer ; but his hat was pitched in an attitude of despair over his brow, and great weights of grief hung upon the corners of his mouth.

“ Why, Archy ! what's the matter ? ”

“ Nothin' ! ” muttered Archy in a cracked, uncertain voice.

“Why, yes there is!” cried the alarmed and sympathizing widow. “Say! she hasn’t mitteded ye, has she?”

Whereupon Archy’s feelings burst forth in loud weeping and lamentation; in the midst of which, he sobbed out the story of his woe.

“I thought, of course, you was talkin’ over the weddin’ with her all this time! Well, Archy, she ain’t wuth breakin’ your heart about. She’s an unfeelin’ coquette; and that’s the long and short on’t!”

“Don’t blame her,” said Archy, saturating his sleeve. “She never thought I’d be sich a silly fool as to — to want to marry her!”

“But why didn’t you come right home and tell me? What kep’ ye so?”

“I — I — didn’t feel like comin’ any sooner.”

“Poor boy!” murmured the widow.

She did not question him further on that point. Archy was glad of that; for he felt that Lucy’s secret was sacred; and, moreover, it would have given him too much pain to relate what he knew of her indiscretion. Mrs Brandle was already sufficiently severe, heaping reproaches and proverbs upon the offending girl.

“‘A woman’s mind, the wintry wind!’” said she. “If you’d been a little more offish, she’d have thought more on ye; and maybe she’ll come round yet, Archy. ‘Foller love, and it will flee; flee love, and it will foller thee.’”

“No, she won’t! she’ll foller somebody else,” replied the genius dolefully.

“Some rich man, I s'pose she thinks, because she's perty !
'Many a one, for land, takes a fool by the hand.' But don't
you care, my son. 'He that's poor when he's married shall
be rich before he's buried ;' and there's enough other gals
that'll have ye, good as she.”

“No, no, not as good as she! and I don't ever want to be
rich now !”

“Come, you mustn't give up so. I'll tell ye what,
Archy,” said the widow, trying to think of something to cheer
him, “you'll make a fortin' yet out of that ten-mile-an-hour
horse-propellin' carriage. The idee of havin' a horse turnin'
a treadmill and ride is the cutest thing, arter all !”

“The horse-propeller may go to grass, for all I care. I
sha'n't teeh it agin !”

“Oh, yes, you will ! don't talk so, Archy. And there's the
dog-churn : I've been thinkin' we can use that the way you
said, — tie a piece of meat jest out of reach of Carlo's nose,
so's't when he tries to git it he'll haf to turn the wheel.
Come, we'll git out the churn to-morrow, and try it.”

“Cant't now,” said Archy.

“Can't? Why not?”

“'Cause I used the wheels.”

“What for?”

“To make that darned” —

“Don't swear, my son,” interposed Mrs. Brandle.

“That double-motioned punkin-parin' machine,” said
Archy.

“ And why don't you finish that ? ”

“ 'Cause I can't till punkins git ripe, so I can try one. ”

“ There was your labor-savin' corn-husker you had last year — what ever become o' that ? ”

“ 'Twouldn't work. ”

“ Wouldn't work ! Why not ? ”

“ Cause all ears o' corn don't happen to be of a bigness ; which I didn't think on at fust. ”

“ But your flyin'-machine, my son ” —

“ I don't care for the flyin'-machine ! It never'll go. I shall take that, and the horse-propeller, and the punkin-parer, and every thing else, and burn 'em all up together ! ” said the disconsolate Archy.

“ Well, well, my son, ” — the widow took his head in her lap to comfort him, — “ no wonder you feel kind o' down in the mouth to-night. But you'll be in better sperits to-morrow. You'd better go to bed now perty soon, and git a good night's rest. ‘ Airly to bed, and airly to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise. ’ You'll be bright as a dollar in the mornin', I'll prophesy ! ”

Archy went to his room, sat by the window, and looked across the moonlit silent fields towards Lucy's home. His heart was very heavy still. He could not think of sleep ; he could not get breath enough to sigh with in the little chamber. But the night was dewy and cool, and it invited him forth.

Stealing from the house, he crossed the orchard, and wandered down the road, past the mill-pond, and through the

quiet village to the bridge. The river glimmered cold in the moonshine, dashing over dark rocks ; and the voice of the waters sounded mournful and lonesome to his soul. He wondered if they had ever sounded so to anybody before, and thought of himself as the only miserable being in the universe.

Lucy, he thought, was happy : Lucy was sleeping there in the still cottage, which he had come all this distance with his aching heart just to look at once more, and sigh hopelessly for her. The moon shone brightly upon the white gable, and silvered the lilaes and quinces that screened the lower windows of the house. Archy knew her room : and, climbing the garden fence, he entered softly among the shrubbery, and laid himself down upon the earth, beneath the starry heavens, where he could watch her windows ; wishing he might lie there and watch there until his soul sank into the oblivion of that blessed sleep from which there is no awaking. Foolish, foolish Archy, not to know that in a few days his flying-machine would once more have an interest for him, and that even Guy's pocket-knife would give life a flavor !

While he lay there, the dull tramp of hoofs and the muffled grinding of light wheels through the sand caught his ear. A vehicle stopped by the fence. A man alighted, tied his horse, and, climbing into the garden, passed within three yards of Archy lying darkly on the ground. The genius crouched and trembled, and listened for dogs ; for, as the form moved by him in the moonlight, he recognized the proud, confident, dangerous Guy.

But no dogs came snuffing after ; and, stilling his wild heart-beats, Archy watched. And now he almost cried out with agony, so bitter was his woe, so sharp his jealous pangs ; for, when the wild youth shook the boughs of the rustling lilac under Lucy's window, a beautiful head with curls stole out of the shadows of the chamber, and appeared in the moonlight, looking down into the gloom.

The genius crept away, but hid again by the fence, as two forms, issuing together from the garden, passed into the street, and silently mounted the vehicle. Then again was heard the dull tramp of hoofs, with the muffled grinding of wheels along the sandy street ; and Archy was alone under the stars.

“ O Lucy, Lucy ! you give your love to that bad man, who don't know the vally on't ; and he'll break your heart wus'n you have broke mine ! ”

Having uttered this prophecy as he recrossed the bridge, Archy returned home, and went to bed. He fell asleep almost immediately, and dreamed that a flock of wild flying-machines alighted on his mother's door-yard, where Lucy fed them out of her new flower-boxes ; and that Guy Bannington was changed into a dog-churn, but still insisted on smoking his cigar while Carlo was turning him.

It was late the next morning when he awoke. The birds were singing before his window, and the sun was shining upon his bed.

“ Well, my son ! ” said Mrs. Brandle, greeting him with a cheerful smile as he made his appearance : “ you have had

a nice sleep, haven't ye? You look bright as can be! I have milked the cow and fed the pig, so's't you can go to work on your horse-propeller right arter breakfast."

Archy was touched by his mother's kindness, but lugubriously shook his uncombed head at the horse-propeller and breakfast. He went to the shop in a little while; and Mrs. Brandle, hearing the noise of hammering and sawing, peeped softly in to see what he was doing. He was finishing some flower-boxes commenced the day before.

"Oh!" said the widow, in a kind, half-reproachful tone, "are ye to work on them? What's your notion, my son?"

"I told her I would finish 'em and take 'em over to-day," said Archy.

Firm in his resolution to keep his promise, he put the boxes carefully together, and set off with them that forenoon.

Reaching Mrs. Pinworth's house, he placed the boxes on the piazza, and was hurrying away, when a voice spoke to him; and, looking round, he saw Luey's face at a window. She beckoned him back, met him on the piazza, and gave him her hand.

"Ye want me to put dirt in the boxes for ye?" asked the genius.

"No, Archy, but to thank you. Perhaps I shall not see you many times more," she said in a low voice.

"O Luey! Be you goin'?"

"Hush, Archy! They mustn't hear. I shall always

remember you kindly. Be good, be kind to your mother, and you will be happy."

While Archy was choking, and trying to say something, she disappeared. It was all like a dream to him, — her pale face, her anxious and distressed look, her sweet, gentle voice. Reluctantly he left the piazza, and returned home.

"My son!" cried Mrs. Brandle with a beaming countenance, "you can't guess who has been here?"

"Who has?" asked Archy.

"Guy Bannington," smiled the widow.

"What did he want?" asked the genius with darkening countenance.

"What do you think? *Sich* a nice chance it is for you, my son! Col. Bannington, you know, — he can't walk; and Aaron Burble, that takes care on him and sees to things, has too much to do; and they jest want to git you to wheel him about in his chair. They keep the dogs chained up; and you can be to hum mor'n half the time, Guy says, and git good pay; and the work won't be nothin' but fun!"

The widow was all smiles; but Archy's face did not brighten.

"'Sfer suthin' 'sides that Guy wants me!" he muttered, but refused to state the nature of the diabolical business in which he suspected that he was to be employed.

"Don't you go to gittin' any *sich* notions into your head," said Mrs. Brandle. "'An easy fool is a knave's tool,' as the old sayin' is; but you're smart enough to look out for yourself; and I don't imagine Guy is half so bad as some folks

say. For my part, I don't see how anybody can help likin' him ; for he's jest as perlite as he can be."

That was gall to Archy, who scowlingly knocked in the crown of his straw hat over his forehead, and looked glum.

After dinner, however, he was persuaded to go and call on Colonel Bannington. The colonel's wheeled chair decided him. He came home quite cheerful, having accepted the situation ; reclaimed the discarded pocket-knife from the sumachs ; and immediately set to work to construct a new and improved patent hand-carriage for invalids.

III.

COLONEL BANNINGTON.



ARCHY entered upon his new duties the next morning. He was at first dreadfully afraid of the colonel, and the sight of Guy reminded him sharply of his woe : nevertheless, his occupation was little else than sport.

The next day it had ceased to be a novelty, and he did not like it quite so well. On the third day it became a very serious business ; and, on the fourth, drudgery. Geniuses do not like drudgery.

Up and down the gravelled avenue, and round and round among the garden-walks, all that fourth day afternoon, Archy wheeled the colonel.

“Fast !” and he gave speed to the little vehicle. “Slow now !” and they moved round more leisurely. “Halt !” and at the word Archy stayed his hand, always gladly.

The colonel was flying from a hungry phantom which pursued him ever, and whether he travelled or delayed, rode

fast or slow, came always close behind him, closer than Archy who pushed, and preyed upon his soul.

A restless, middle-aged man, with silvered hair ; sharp, attenuated features ; cold, keen eyes as gray as steel ; an active walker and bold rider once, energetic in business or sport, but now a cripple, with his stricken limbs laid out helplessly before him on his chair, — the colonel hated worse than death that phantom of Eanui.

“ It’s a good thing to have legs, Archy ! ”

“ Yes, *sir!* ” said the genius emphatically, wiping his features.

“ Run with ’em, and bring my shot-gun ! ”

Archy ran, and returned puffing.

“ Forward ! ” said the colonel, cocking the piece, with his eye on a woodpecker in one of the fruit-trees. “ Halt ! ” It started to fly. BANG ! and the bird dropped with scarce a flutter, falling aslant into a bed of verbenas, where its brilliant cap and blood-stained plumage vied with the tints of the flowers.

“ Pick it up, and call the cat, ” said the colonel bitterly.

He had shot the woodpecker ; but he had not killed the phantom, which was, after all, the object to be destroyed.

The cat devoured the bird, and the phantom devoured him.

“ Come, come ! ” he cried impatiently, as Archy returned from feeding puss and replacing the gun. “ Stir your legs while you can ! Maybe you’ll wake up some morning, and

find, instead of legs, a couple of logs in bed with you, as I did, — dang 'em !” And the colonel struck his useless members with his cane.

“ I was running fast as I could !” said Archy. “ I’m some tired, though !” And he recommenced pushing.

“ A hard way to earn three dollars a week, ain’t it ?”

“ Yes, *sir* !” emphasized Archy.

“ Well, you do so much better than I expected, I am going to give you four.”

Archy’s face beamed, so happy that it was a pity the colonel could not see it. “ Four dollars ! — won’t ma be glad !” What he felt was audible in his tones, however ; and for a minute the colonel lost sight of the phantom.

“ The sun is almost down. We’ll feed the fish, Archy : then you may go.”

The invalid guided his chair by a handle commanding the front wheels, and so approached a fountain in the midst of the garden. It was a marble-rimmed basin, with a brazen swan in the centre, holding its neck upstretched, and spurting from its bill a perpendicular jet, which kept a golden ball whirling and dancing in the sunshine.

“ Now bring some worms.”

This was the best sport of the day to Archy, who ran to dig the bait.

The jet being shut off, the surface of the water, lately dashed into glittering ripples, had by this time become tranquil ; and the colonel could see in the clear gravelled depths of the fountain his favorite fish.

Archy soon came running with both fists closed ; but tripped, and, tumbling headlong, ruined a fine dahlia by his awkward downfall. The colonel's eye glittered, and he uttered an exclamation.

"I—I hung on to the worms!" stammered the genius, glancing, with a ludicrous expression of mingled seriousness and fright, from the dahlia to the colonel.

"You are a blundering fellow! How did you lose those fingers?" asked Bannington.

"Oh! cut 'em off," said Archy, not inclined to enter into particulars.

The colonel held a worm near the surface of the water, till a large trout below began to stir himself, then rose, and with a quick splash took it from his fingers.

"Drop one, Archy." A worm fell on the water; and instantly up flashed a smaller trout, showing his bright sides clear above the surface.

Archy now got permission to feed one from his hand as the colonel had done. But by this time the agreeable titillation of the previously swallowed worm under the speckled waistcoat of the great trout had rendered him bold and voracious; and, leaping from the water, he not only took the offered bait, but also Archy's unlucky finger, which he raked severely with his fine sharp teeth. This was unexpected sport to the colonel; but it lasted but a moment.

"Who's that girl passing?"

Archy forgot his finger, and gazed.

“A sweetheart of yours? She can’t help casting an eye at my flowers. Run and tell her to come in: I’ve something for her.”

Arehy gasped, and rubbed his hands on his trousers, and turned white and red in streaks, as he went to execute this order. The girl was hurrying away, and appeared to stop reluctantly.

“Ah, Arehy! how do you do?” she said with a faint smile under her hood.

“Mr. Bannington, he wants to see ye,” said the genius through the fence.

“Guy does?” in a startled whisper, with a flashing look out of her surprised hazel-eyes.

“No: the eunnel. There he is!”

The surprise changed to consternation.

“Arehy, I can’t see him! What does he want, what can he want, of me?”

“Oh! come in. He said so. He’ll be mad if you don’t!” Arehy gave an anxious glance over his shoulder. “Say, Luey: you know him, don’t ye?”

“Too well! Go back: he calls you. I will come in.”

More agitated now than Arehy himself, she returned to the gate, and entered.

“Forward!” The colonel took a pair of seissors from his pocket, and commenced cutting a bouquet from the flower-beds. “Walk this way,” — to Luey, who had paused by a brilliant plot of pansies, and was waiting tremblingly. “Are you fond of flowers?”

Then she saw, and Archy, collecting his wits, also discovered, that he had not yet recognized her; and even the genius experienced a qualm of apprehension, confusedly remembering what cause she had to dread an encounter with the crippled colonel.

“ Sir — yes — I am very fond of them,” she managed to utter, looking how to escape.

“ Do you live in the village ? ”

“ Yes, sir.” She bent over a heliotrope, and her hood hid her face.

“ Forward ! ” The colonel guided his chair round a curved path, and came up before her. Lucy, perceiving that a recognition was inevitable, strove to be calm. “ Halt ! ” He clipped a rose. “ Help yourself to any thing I can’t reach. Call, when you pass this way again, and Archy — forward ! — shall give you some.”

“ Thank you,” said Lucy.

The colonel started. He now observed a grace in her attitudes, and a sweetness and refinement in her accents, which could not belong to the sort of person he had supposed her; and it may be, that, at the sight of those brown curls peeping from the hood, old recollections began to rush upon him.

“ Where do you live ? ” he inquired.

“ Colonel Bannington,” said Lucy, “ I thought you knew me when you sent to call me in, else I should not have come,” — turning full upon him her gentle face, full of timidity, pity, and pleading.

“ Arlyn’s daughter ! ” almost shrieked the invalid, his countenance fading white. “ What are you here for ? ”

“ Don’t forget ; you sent Archibald,” began Lucy : but he did not hear.

“ You have come to look at me ; to see me with these legs ; to write to him how I go wheeled in a chair ! ”

“ God knows,” cried Lucy, — “ God knows, I am very sorry for you ! ” clasping her hands with earnestness and anguish. “ And my father — my father would be sorry too, if he should see you so ! ”

“ Sorry ! ” hissed back the sick man, scattering the flowers in his rage. “ It’s a lie ! He crippled me ; he put me in this chair ; and, if he was here, I’d have none of his sorrow, but his own legs, by Heaven ! I’ve a loaded gun for ’em when he comes : tell him so, — tell him so ! — Forward ! ”

Archy, beside himself with horror, mechanically held his hand to the chair, but did not push.

“ Colonel Bannington ! ” said Lucy, rising above all fear, “ my good friend. once ! ” — and, advancing close to his chair, she stood before him, and looked upon him, all love and tears. “ I remember, and you remember too, how I used to play in this garden, and you were good to me ” —

“ Forward, I say ! ” — and the invalid twisted his arms violently.

But Lucy did not step aside, and Archy did not push.

“ You knew me then, — that I never lied to you ; and you must believe me now ! ” she went on with strange energy,

her hood flying back, her color heightened, her whole soul flashing out. "Believe me, my father never intended you any injury, and is not the cause of this!" — with a glance at the paralyzed limbs. "How could he be?"

"You'd better not, — better not!" threatened the cripple. "Go!"

"I will; for, hate me as you may, I can't in return wish you so much pain as the sight of me gives you," with a handkerchief striking the drops quickly from her eyes. "You shall never see me again! Good-by!"

And she was gone.

Archy began to push.

"Stop!"

There lay upon the walk a rose the colonel had plucked for her; and he must needs thrust his cane into it, and pierce and tear it, as he had already pierced and torn her heart.

"Forward!" Dumb with dismay, Archy obeyed. "And next time I say go on, do you go on, no matter who stands in the way, if it's the Almighty!"

"Yes, sir," assented the horrified Archy.

Clatter of hoofs was heard; and galloping up the avenue came Guy, gayly mounted, and accompanied by three powerful dogs. Passing the house-corner, he sprang off lightly, dropping the reins on the horse's neck, and sending him to the stables; then advanced to meet the invalid.

"Well, colonel, how have you got through the day?"

"Curse those animals! They come snuffing around me as

if" — the colonel made a cut at one of the dogs with his cane — "as if they wanted to see how much of me has died since morning!"

"Ranger! Blackfoot! Bruce!" Guy pointed the way the horse had gone before; and the dogs dropped their tails, and followed, wonderfully to the relief of Archy.

Angry with himself at having been angry, the colonel gnawed his nervous lips.

"I'm just like those diseased poplars, — dying limb by limb: only with me the life and fire all crowds into the upper parts as the lower parts die; that's what makes me so devilish irritable! You must bear with me, boys!" His voice began to break. "Help me into the house now: I feel the dew. Guy, don't you look so sober: I hate to see you! What's the matter?" sharply.

"I don't like to have you whip my dogs."

"But do you really care if I strike the whelps?"

"No, nor if you strike me," said Guy.

Brief, cold words, apparently, yet tender. Guy, aware how it annoyed the colonel to see any one seem sorrowful on his account, had feigned concern for his dogs; but his father understood him, and they exchanged silent looks.

Guy motioned to Archy; and, lifting the carriage at the door, they carried it up the steps, and set it down in the hall.

"There, Archy, you may go." And Guy wheeled the chair into the library; while the genius ran away, rejoicing at his freedom, but looking back excitedly to see if the dogs were after him.

Having secured the animals in the kennels, Guy returned to the library.

The colonel was sitting with his back towards the door. A salver spread with tea-things was in his lap, untouched. Before him on the wall hung a pair of paintings, aglow in the soft red twilight: one, a picture of a lady and child; the other, of a military personage on horseback. He seemed gazing at the portrait of the lady as Guy entered; then his head sank shaking on his breast; and Guy, advancing, had a side glimpse of the sick man's face, writhing with inward torment.

“Waiting to have me at supper with you?” said the son carelessly, as if he had observed nothing. “I’ve had my tea.”

The colonel grasped his knife and fork, his hands trembling impotently over his toast.

“Is it you, Guy? Dang it!” — dropping his knife, — “how a little excitement tears me to pieces now-days!” And, attempting to sip his tea, he spilled it.

Guy pretended to be interested in a cactus that hung in a basket before the window.

“How like a great crawling crab that thing looks, with its awkward, jointed, long-reaching claws!”

“Guy, can you guess what’ll happen next time that cactus flowers?” asked the colonel. “It has blossomed twice: each time there has been a change in our family. The first time, I was married; the second time, my father died, —

fourteen years ago. It will flower again soon: what is to be then, — a wedding or a funeral?"

"I did not know you were a superstitious man, eolonel."

The eolonel again tried to eat his toast, but looked up at his son standing by the window.

"You are a tolerably good-looking fellow, Guy."

"And I am tolerably well aware of it."

"No doubt! Why don't you get married?"

"I, eolonel?" Guy shrugged his shoulders.

"You have sowed enough wild oats; but you have been behaving a good deal better lately, and I didn't know but there might be a reason for it." Guy turned away his face. "I should like to see you bring a beautiful young woman into the house, Guy. I could preach you a sermon on that subject; but" —

The eolonel stopped. Spiked and bristling as the exterior of his life was, there were green spots within that iron paling, sacred as the graves of loved ones.

Guy turned, and looked at the portrait of himself on his mother's knee, till his tears rushed up and blurred all.

"The house has been a barn since she went; and it will be, Guy, until your wife eomes. When she comes, — let me give you a word of warning, — never," said the eolonel solemnly, — "never, if you love her, give her an unkind look or word!"

"If I love her, I surely shall not!"

"Don't we kill the things we love?" retorted the eolonel

quickly, with a spasm of pain in his face. "But you'll learn that soon enough!" — a prophecy which Guy had afterwards bitter cause to remember. "Isn't that a woman's picture you carry in your breast-pocket?"

Guy started like one who has a fatal secret on the point of exposure. He took a chair, but, instead of sitting down, leaned on the back of it, and twirled it under his hand.

"Don't be alarmed. I've seen you looking at it when you thought I was asleep. No man looks at any but a woman's picture the way you have looked at that."

Guy began to pace the room excitedly.

"What's the matter? Won't she have you? By Jove, boy! if you think of her as I guess you do by your looks, you are no son of mine if you don't get her. Dang the obstacles, rivals or parents or" —

"Parents?" eagerly asked Guy.

"Of course, parents are secondary."

"But if you were a parent in the case?"

"I?" said the colonel impatiently. "Don't I know how much we both need a woman in the house? And I've that faith in your good sense and taste, that the girl that would suit you would please me: any way, I'd risk it. I don't care if she's poor; you've money enough: and I know you wouldn't fall in love with one that wasn't beautiful; though I might object if she wasn't." And he glanced at the lady's picture on the wall.

Guy fingered the miniature in his pocket nervously. "Beautiful!" he said to himself, as if half tempted to produce it, and show his father *how* beautiful.

"Then what or who is in the way? Is she already married?"

"No!" Guy bent his strong brows and clear blue eyes upon the colonel, facing him boldly. "You are in the way!"

"I?" The sick man flashed. "She objects to me, then? She knows what a sharp-tempered old cripple I am!"

"No, no, no!" cried Guy, his features charged with emotion. "You shouldn't have made me talk on this subject: we'll drop it."

"No!" cried the colonel, with a sharp suspicion of the truth. "Show me that picture."

Deliberately Guy removed the tea-tray, wheeled the chair to the window, and placed the daguerrotype open in the colonel's hand.

For a long time, Colonel Bannington regarded it without a word; and Guy, watching his features, saw them settle and harden, implacable as stone.

"Guy!" — he raised his steel-gray eyes to the flushed face of his son, — "the day and the hour I hear of your marrying that girl, I put every dollar of my property beyond your reach forever. That's all. You know me well."

"Alas, I do!" said Guy bitterly, with resolute, proud-curving lips: "you are the most vindictive of men!"

“ I am vindictive as Cain,” answered the colonel. “ Here is your daguerrotype. Do with it and do with me as you please.”

“ Thank you : I shall. Good-night ! ” And Guy walked away quietly enough, but inwardly furious with himself for having suffered other eyes to desecrate Lucy’s picture.

IV.

A LOVE-CHASE.



HE next day, Archy's situation was a sinecure. The colonel was too ill to leave his bed.

The birds were singing, the dew was on the flowers, the fountain lisped and laughed, the golden ball danced in the sun; and Archy sat on the marble curb, whistling. The approach of Guy reminded him that he was miserable; and, slipping out of sight a certain pocket-knife he was playing with, he put on a gloomy countenance, and waited.

Guy had not yet employed him in any diabolical affair; but now, the genius thought, his temptation was coming. But the young man only wished to inquire what had happened to his father just before he rode up the previous evening; and, having obtained the unpleasant information, he walked hastily to the kennel, released Ranger, and departed, with his canine companion leaping and capering around him in high glee.

Down towards the little village nestled in the misty valley, with its few chimney-smokes rising soft and thin in the morning air; through the cool elm-shaded streets, past the mill,

and across the bridge, to Mrs. Pinworth's piazza, — went Ranger and his master.

The approach of a caller created a fluttering among the inmates; one running to peep through the blinds, another hastening to the glass, and both whispering hurriedly.

“It's Guy Bannington's dog!”

“Dear me! how we do look!”

“I can't see him in this dress, mother! *You* must go to the door.”

“Mercy on me, Sophy! I *must* fix my hair! Run and put on your” —

Rat-tat! went the knocker.

Then all was hushed. Guy waited. Ranger wagged his tail on the piazza floor. After a delay of a few minutes, a tall, spare, prim female, with an air of faded gentility, opened the door.

“Mr. Bannington!” she said with polite surprise. “I thought I heard a knock! Will you walk in?” — retreating backwards with smiling, precise dignity.

“Thank you, Mrs. Pinworth. I wish to see Miss Arlyn.”

The lady's expression changed instantly.

“Come in!” She led the way to a small gloomy parlor. “Be seated, Mr. Bannington.” Instead of going to call Luey, she placed herself stiff and stately in a chair facing the visitor. “Mr. Bannington, I am grieved and astonished!”

Guy raised his eyebrows. “Can I afford you any consolation, madam?”

“When I need consolation, I shall apply to the proper source for it,” — Mrs. Pinworth cast a holy look at the ceiling. “I can now no longer doubt your designs upon my niece, Mr. Bannington.”

“My design at this time is to speak with her a few minutes, I beg to remind you,” observed Guy.

“Ours is one of the oldest and most respectable families in the State, you are aware, sir!” said the lady. “If disgrace comes into it now, it will be through my niece. She is a vain, headstrong, wilful girl; and ever since her father left her in my charge” —

“Madam,” Guy interrupted her, “I’d much rather just now see Miss Arlyn than hear your remarks about her.”

There was something in his manner, civil as it was, which cut. The lady quivered and gasped a little; then said, —

“I’ve never objected to your seeing Lucy in my daughter’s presence, sir. But she is not a fit person to be your wife, — you never had any intention of making her your wife, — and I will not let her be trifled with.”

Wrath and scorn flashed up in the young man’s face; but he calmly measured his words.

“Whatever my intentions are, I know that Lucy Arlyn is worthy to be the wife of a much better man than I pretend to be. I repeat, I wish to speak with her; and, for once, not in the presence of your estimable daughter.”

Mrs. Pinworth rose with a spiteful air.

“Lucy is not at home, sir.”

“Then I assure you, madam, there is nothing to detain me under your hospitable roof,” said Guy, rising also. “Will you be so kind as to inform me where she is?”

“There’s no telling any thing about her since you turned her head. She acts unaccountably. Religious counsel has no influence. I’ve labored with her in vain!”

“It is just possible, Mrs. Pinworth, that your stylo of labor is not quite the thing. Good-morning!” And Guy bowed himself from the door.

“Is he gone?” called Sophy, rushing to the stairs above in elegant dishabille. “Strango you couldn’t entertain him just a minute till I came!”

“It was Luey ho wanted! So you can just take off that dress again, and go and wash the dishes!”

Guy stood upon the bridge, irritated and irresolute. The day was perfectly beautiful. Around the alder-tops, and over the stream, a pair of king-birds were catching flies, — darting hither and thither, or skinning close to the foam and bubbles; and now, alit, watching with mild eyes from the dead boughs of a bald old birch-tree by the water. Not far above, the mill-dam poured its snowy and reverberating cascade. The air was tingling with sweet life. The pure blue of the sky was set off by dazzling white clouds. Beyond the valley swelled the green mountain-slopes, with forests of billowy foliage, undulating far away to the purple and violet peaks which seemed melting into ether.

Not long could he look and listen, and breathe the deli-

eious air, without getting into sympathy with so much joy and peace and beauty. He was considering what he should do, when he observed Ranger snuffing the planks, and moving off upon the sand, with his long ears sweeping almost to the ground. Following to the end of the bridge, he discovered the prints of shoes, slender, lightly impressed; shoes, possibly (he thrilled to think), worn by the dearest feet in the world. Ranger, as if in sympathy with his master, scented the delicate lingering aroma of those prints, and gladly, at a word and gesture, bounded off on the track.

Guy followed up into the main street of the village, to an open staircase, at the entrance of which there was what is termed a "shingle," with a cocked thumb and a knowing finger directing the way to the office of "Elphaz Pelt, attorney and counsellor-at-law, up stairs."

Then Ranger appeared puzzled; snuffed in and out; bounded up stairs, and returned; until Guy determined to call on the squire.

"Where's Elphaz?" he inquired of a red-haired law-student writing at a desk, who with eringing politeness informed him that Squire Pelt had gone out. "I'll wager," said Guy, "it's some young woman that takes him from his office at this time of day."

"Shouldn't wonder!" chuckled the red-haired youth; "for there was one here, — the prettiest girl there is in this town too!"

"I should like to know whom you call the prettiest girl, Abner."

Flattered by this familiar appeal to his taste from the son of his master's wealthiest client, Abner fawned up to him, rubbing his hands, and said, "I mean Lucy Arlyn!"

Guy turned on his heel.

"Ranger, you're worth a million dollars!" And, leaving Abner to scratch his wondering red head, he hurried down stairs.

Going out of the doorway, he was met by Squire Pelt coming in; a lean-looking, angular man, with a clean-shaven, gristly countenance, barren of flesh, but unctuous with suavity; a thin, metallic voice, disagreeable to the ear; and a pair of grayish twinkling eyes, with a cast which gave them the appearance of winking shrewdly at each other across the bridge of his nose.

"What can I do for my friend Guy?" asked the lawyer with overflowing affability. With a hasty excuse, Guy shook him off. "Always at your command," — Elphaz bowed and flourished, and with one eye (the other seemed looking across the way for a client) followed Guy, while Guy followed Ranger.

Down from a gorge in the eastern hills comes a mountain brook, falling into the river just above the mill-pond; along the course of which runs a road, winding between the torrent and the cliffs which shut in the ravine. This road Ranger took, leading his master by waysides still shaded and glistening with dew; under wild banks overgrown with briars, and crowned by dark hemlocks, high up and solitary; amid seat-

tered growths of ash-trees, swamp-maples, and spotted beeches ; and through cool sweet depths of shade, odorous with pines, and musical with the noise of the water-course.

In these wild scenes, Guy shook off his troubles. He felt free and glad as the crows clamoring in the tree-tops. Gleams of hope and peace smiled to him through gloomy ways, like the soft, barred sunshine falling aslant, far off in the woods, upon silent trunks and boughs. The course of true love never did run smooth ; but his was gushing and joyous as that mountain stream, — all opposition no more to it than than the rocks that broke the torrent into music and silver.

On the wet grass and moist soil of the road he finds Lucy's foot-prints : they lose themselves to sight in the woods ; but the hound follows them still. Here she has descended to the bed of the brook ; and again appears a footprint in the washed sand. There are marks upon a decaying log, where moss has been gathered — by her hands. On this broad ledge, that slopes from under the roots of leaning twin-beeches and dips into the shimmering water, she has surely sat down, and perhaps dabbled her bare feet. Ranger snuffs from the rippling rim up to the naked roots which the great freshets wash ; then hurries on. At length, he reaches a spot where he appears baffled for a minute ; starts on ; returns, and starts again, snuffing to the water's edge ; then leaps to the dry backs of bowlders between which the current gushes ; finds there the scent ; and bounds to the farther bank, followed by his master.

The way grew difficult now, obstructed by thickets, in which the dog disappeared. Suddenly were heard cries of terror, then a great splashing; and Guy ran forward in time to see Ranger recrossing the brook on a log, and a human being struggling in the water. He rushed in great trepidation down the bank, but felt suddenly relieved when he saw that it was not Lucy.

A man in black clothes got up in the channel, slipping on the slimy stones until he obtained a footing.

“Brother,” he said, standing knee-deep, bareheaded, and drenched in the brook, “are you a friend to humanity?”

His plight was so ludicrous, and the question so comical under the circumstances, that Guy could hardly have helped laughing had the man been in serious danger.

“If you are, perform the charitable act of catching my hat, which is going down stream.”

Guy fished out the beaver with some trouble, and carried it across the tree-trunk to the stranger, who stood by this time on the other bank, letting himself drip, and looking melancholy.

“What were you in there for?”

“The question I was just asking.” He shook the water from his nose, poked the wet hair out of his eyes, and put on his hat. “No doubt, it was for a wise purpose. Perhaps I needed the bath. Or—the meaning of it comes to me—I ought not to have crossed the stream.”

“I was afraid my dog had something to do with the accident.”

“I acknowledge no such thing as accident. The dog was simply an instrument to bring about what was necessary. I was crossing on the log one way, when the dog went to cross the other way. I lost my faith for a moment, and cried out; but he was true to his mission, and tumbled me into the water.” And the stranger with perfect gravity proceeded to wring out his wet garments.

Guy had not time to laugh; for now the cry of the hound was heard musical in the woods.

Under a wild cherry-tree, at the base of a rock, through a cleft of which the brook poured down, her elbow on her knee, her bonnet on the ground, her lap full of mosses, — seeing visionary things in the bubbling and beaded water, — sat Lucy; when Ranger dashed out of the undergrowth, and came bounding and barking towards her. She did not move from her place; and there Guy found her, a picture ravishing to a lover’s soul, with the sunlight on the boughs above her, the cascade tumbling its foam at her feet, and the hound licking her hands.

V.

LOVE, FISH, AND PHILOSOPHY.



Y wood-nymph, my Undine!" exclaimed Guy.

"Ranger has no such romantic fancies," said

Lucy, caressing the dog's sleek brown ears: "he knows it is only poor me, — no cold water-sprite, but oh! so human! How did you find me?" with a resolute smile concealing traces of sadness.

"Ranger brought me: there was never such a hunt. Did he frighten you?" And, kicking away the hound, Guy took his place at her side.

"He gave me a start; but I knew you were near."

"Were you glad?"

"Guy!" The look she gave him was enough, — full of melting love, and also full of suffering. He clasped her with impetuous fervor.

"My child, my darling, you shall suffer no more! I swear it!"

She cried sobbingly for a few moments, the pent-up anguish of her heart breaking forth.

"It is so comforting to have any one kind to me, after

what I endure at home! But, Guy, — don't be angry, — this is the last time we shall meet!"

"Yes, Lucy; for we shall not part again!"

She nestled close to him, and there was a long silence, — only the brook filling the woods with its voices.

"Let me be happy in that thought a little while."

"Be happy in it forever!"

"Guy, I saw your father last night, if it was not a dream: I wish it was a dream! What possessed me to go that way, I can't tell: I am always doing such foolish things. I suppose it was a desire to see the old place for the last time."

"I know all about it," said Guy. "Don't you care: it is all for the best. It has decided me. The whole world seemed so wild and joyous as I was coming up here, it reproached me for my mean concessions. Lucy, we will be as free as the birds and brooks!"

She started from him, fearing his dangerous arguments, and knowing his power.

"Don't talk to me now: I am too weak. I have eaten nothing since yesterday!"

"What, Lucy! you have had no breakfast?"

"I was too miserable to think of it. I heard California news had arrived; and I went to Mr. Pelt's office, in hopes to get a letter from father. It is strange he doesn't write: but I know he has written, if he is alive; and sometimes I am wicked enough to suspect Mr. Pelt of keeping back the letters."

“ If he had any motive for keeping them back, he would do it ! ” exclaimed Guy. “ A man that was first your father’s lawyer against my father, and is now my father’s lawyer too ” —

“ He has eyes that can see two opposite interests at the same time,” said Lucy ; “ but he couldn’t be so cruel as to keep back my letters, I know.”

“ You have never received any money from your father yet ? ”

“ No ; and that’s one thing my aunt torments me about. She does every thing she can to make me feel dependent on her charity. I so dreaded to go home and tell her no money had come, and I felt so wretched and lonesome, that I wandered off up here.”

“ I was in that viper’s nest this morning. How did you ever live there, my poor dove ? ” And Guy related his adventure, at which Lucy could not help laughing.

“ Didn’t she want to pray with you ? It’s a wonder ! Usually, when she quarrels with folks, she goes and prays with them, and tells God, in their presenee, what awful sinners they are. She is waiting for a chance now to hold me up in that way.”

“ If, like Luther, she can pray best when she is angry, she would have been fervent over me ! ” said Guy. “ How I hate to come in contact with such people ! But forget them, to-day at least. You must be hungry : let me provide you a luncheon, — show you how we will do when we live in that

little cottage, and are very poor in every thing but happiness."

This allusion to what might be, if she would permit him to sacrifice his future for her sake, gave her less pleasure than pain, as when we have glimpses of a heaven we cannot enter.

She sat pondering what he had said, and nursing her resolution in her bosom, — too tender for a thing so harsh, — while love was pleading to be folded there alone. Guy left her, to cut from a clump of young maples a slender and flexible rod. He trimmed off the twigs, and proceeded to attach to it a line which he unrolled from his pocket; then opened a paper of many-colored artificial insects, from which he selected one for his purpose.

"Here is something," he said, "that will look more like a fly in the water than a fly itself. Are you fond of trout?"

"Yes; but I don't really think I could manage to eat one raw."

"We'll catch one first, then see about the eating."

He stood where the stream fell into a bright basin of rock and gravel. Here he flung his fly, skipped it in the foam, trailed it over the eddies, let it toss and swim on the ripples, drew it up, and let it fall again as lightly and naturally as possible on the shimmering surface; then sent it like a drowned insect down the falls: but to no purpose.

"My breakfast seems very shy," said Luey. "Who comes there?"

"It is my drenched philosopher!" Guy answered, looking up from his fishing.

The stranger came forward slowly into the small opening by the stream, carrying a forked twig before him above his head. His water-streaked hat was thrown back like a toppling ruin, his mouth was open, and his nose — a monstrous one — was borne high in air ; while his eyes were fixed too intently on the twig to observe that he was observed. He walked straight up to Guy, as if it had been his intention to march over him.

“I seem to stand in your way,” said Guy.

The man halted, lowering the twig, and, with no more expression in his features than if they had been made of putty (which they somewhat resembled), stood looking at him like a wet automaton.

“That fact has a significance, brother ! You have something to do with my mission. What are you doing with a rod and line here ?” asked the philosopher, without a trace of resentment in his stolid features. “That, too, is significant ! The disciples of old were fishermen : greater things than they saw you shall see !”

“They probably never saw so great a nose as I see,” Guy whispered to Luey.

“The nose.” said the stranger, whose sense of hearing seemed miraculous, — and he coolly hooked the forked twig into a button-hole of his coat, — “is a feature of great meaning : it is the magnet of destiny. When you rise above the plane of mirthfulness, you will be taught these truths.”

“Excuse my levity,” said Guy ; and he gravely took a

handkerchief from his pocket. "There is a mosquito on your magnet of destiny."

"Stop!" The stranger stayed his hand, and regarded him with solemn, fishy eyes. "What are you going to do?"

"As a friend of humanity, I am going to kill it."

"Brother!" — with an awful emphasis, — "what right have you to kill a mosquito? Persons on the plane of selfishness may begrudge the little drop of blood which makes an insect happy: I do not."

"He can afford to be so magnanimous," whispered Guy; "for no mosquito can extract any thing moist from the dry mortar his magnet of destiny is composed of. That one plucks up its baffled proboscis, and flies away empty." And, having changed his fly for one of a different color, he returned to his fishing.

Lucy was laughing; when the stranger said to her, grimly, that she ought rather to weep at seeing a brother engaged in such inhuman sport.

"He who called the fishermen you alluded to," said Guy, "rather sanctioned their occupation on one or two occasions;" and he played his fly.

"He who called the fishermen was a progressive man for his age; but a higher development is possible now."

The astounding coolness with which the stranger uttered this sentiment gave Lucy an unpleasant shiver, and she turned from him shocked and disgusted. As for Guy, he was at that moment occupied in landing a fine trout.

“Can you witness the agonies of that fish, without emotion?” sternly said the man, without, however, exhibiting any particular evidence of emotion in his own coarse features.

“The emotion I experience is a very pleasing excitement, only known, I think, to the trout-fisher;” and Guy unhooked his prize. “What you consider its agonies, are, no doubt, ecstasies of pleasure, occasioned by the oxygen in an atmosphere which acts upon it like laughing-gas. Besides, you must understand that it is out of pure benevolence to the fish that I catch the big ones, which have the cruel habit of eating the little ones.”

The putty features softened a little. “What do you do with those you catch?”

“The destiny of this one is to be cooked and eaten on the spot.”

“Retribution truly!” and the man stood a long time contemplating the beautifully tinted prize with the unmistakable interest of appetite.

Guy gathered dry sticks, and broke them: then, kindling a fire on the ground, he left Lucy to feed it with fagots, and went to the brookside with the trout, which he presently brought to her ready for cooking.

“Wait till there is a fine bed of coals,” he said, spitting it with a split stick; “then lay it on them. Maybe I can catch another in the mean time.”

The new fly was successful: the moment it touched the water, a trout leaped, but did not strike the hook.

“ Ah! you lost him!” said the stranger, eagerly watching the sport.

Guy laughed at the regretful tone with which the hungry philosopher uttered these words. Again the fly fell, and whirled in the eddies, — a silver flash, and it disappeared, the twine running away in the water after it.

“ You’ve got one: why don’t you pull him out?” cried the philosopher anxiously.

But Guy, having with a quick movement hooked the trout the instant it snatched the fly, drew gently and steadily upon the yielding rod; till, seeing the fish was not too heavy for his tackle, he lifted it adroitly from the water.

“ Ah! you’ve saved him!” said the spectator with a long breath.

The first fish was by this time on the coals; and the odor of the cooking, wafted to his nostrils, invited him to the fire, which he approached, watching Lucy’s work with longing looks.

“ This is a beautiful primitive method of preparing food,” he observed, as Guy brought the second trout to be roasted; “ and I am impressed ” — snuff, snuff — “ that you will invite me to breakfast.”

“ What! a breakfast of fish?” cried Guy.

“ Though it is sinful to catch them,” said Lucy, radiant over the fire, “ he doesn’t consider them so objectionable when cooked!”

“ When I arrived this morning” (the stranger, unmoved,

kept his eyes on the fish with a very steady regard), "I was going to a hotel for breakfast; but the spirit said, 'Breakfast will be provided.' I now understand that I am directed to partake of trout."

"Your philosophy is so accommodating, perhaps it will allow you to catch your own fish. Here's the rod."

The stranger looked at Guy, then took up the tackle: he examined the fine hook on which the fly was fashioned, and admitted the benevolence of the invention which substituted for a living insect a dead semblance, but questioned the morality of thus deceiving the fish. A fragrant breath of incense from the roasting, however, dissipated his remaining scruples. "I am impressed," said he, "to catch a trout;" and, adding something about the experience being necessary to him, he went to the brook. At the first fling of the line, he caught the fly in his coat-sleeve; then he threw it into a tree, where it became entangled. With much trouble he got it again, and, after several laughably awkward attempts, succeeded in casting the fly upon a rock in mid-channel.

The lovers, glad to be alone, sat down on the ground to breakfast. The fish were placed before them on maple leaves, which served in lieu of plates. They had no seasoning of any kind. Fingers were used in the absence of forks; Guy picking out the bones for Lucy, who, charmed by the novelty of the repast, and assisted by a good appetite, found the rich roasted flesh of the trout delicious.

"Ho, ho!" roared the philosopher: "I've got him!" and

to the surprise of Guy, who had loaned him the rod to get rid of him, he pointed to a wriggling fish, which, by a violent jerk, he had flung high into a beach bough. The time required for him again to disentangle the line was so much gain to the lovers. At last, he came with his trout dressed for the coals: but it was a small fish for a large appetite; and, by Guy's advice, he went to catch another. In a little while, his "Ho, ho!" was heard again.

"The rascal has got another," said Guy. "Isn't it a good joke to see a philosopher, who scrupled just now to kill a mosquito, open his jack-knife, and disembowel a live trout in that cool, scientific manner?—The fire is down, sir: I'll put on some sticks, if you want to be catching another.—Any way to keep him at a distance!"

"I find the exercise necessary after my bath," observed the philosopher; who might have added, that he found the sport fascinating.

He soon brought his third fish, and commenced the process of cooking. Two were soon done, and placed upon leaves; and, with a countenance full of hungry anticipation, he gave his attention to the remaining trout. When it was done, he took it up, and turned to place it with the others: but the leaves were empty; the fish were gone. How could they have disappeared? Neither Guy nor Lucy had moved from their places, as the philosopher himself could testify; and he had been careful to put his breakfast out of their reach. They looked to see him puzzled and chagrined; but he smiled.

“The ignorant wonder,” — he gave them a mystical squint ; “but these things are not strange : invisible guests are with me !” and he struck a solemn attitude.

His imperturbable manner, and the ready simplicity with which he accepted the miracle of the disappearance of his breakfast, hungry as he was, astonished the spectators, who suppressed their mirth to see what he would do next.

“Swedenborg,” said he, “is it you ?” He brought his right arm against his breast with a loud thwack. “Yes, that is Swedenborg ! Is Soerates with you ?” He struck his breast with his left hand. “That is Soerates ! My two guardian spirits !”

“A fish apiece,” said Lucy ; “but your guests must have forgotten their manners, or they wouldn’t have begun on the breakfast till you were ready.”

The philosopher made no answer to this, but appeared to be conversing in whispers with the distinguished guests, who kept his two fists wagging in a rather vivacious manner. The conference ended, he smiled with satisfaction, and looked for his share of the breakfast. During his discourse with Messrs. Swedenborg and Soerates, the third fish had also vanished. Lucy could no longer restrain her merriment, but pointed, with tears flashing in her eyes, at Ranger, who stood a little way off, innocently licking his chaps.

“I have watched your three fish,” said Guy, “going miraculously down that dog’s throat. I didn’t prevent the process, thinking it might have some mystical meaning.”

“It has so! Even this: when I prepare spiritual food for the soul of man, dogs snatch at it! — and liek their chaps!” added the stranger, with a stern look at the laughers.

“If you would cure us of our ineredulity,” said Guy, “you ought to explain to us these mysteries. I think I understand about the fishes; but what is the meaning of that forked switch?”

“This wand,” — the philosopher unhooked it from his button-hole, and instantly dog and breakfast, and the derision of the seepies, appeared to be forgotten, — “this wand I cut by the direction of the spirits, who have revealed to me that there is a great treasure concealed somewhere in this region. I have been led up this stream; and, as near as I can judge, the treasure lies somewhere in that direction,” — pointing to a crag of the eastern mountain visible through the opening of the trees.

“You indicate pretty exactly,” said Guy, “the spot where the money-diggers have been at work.”

The stranger expressed profound surprise, asserting that he had never heard of the hidden treasure except through his invisible guardians, and desiring information respecting it.

“If you will follow the mountain-road,” said Guy, “you will come to a large, desolate-looking, wood-colored house, where lives a little old doctor, who has lost his practice, his property, the best years of his life, and his wits to boot, hunting for those fabulous coffers. If you believe in them, he will believe in you, and be infinitely delighted to see you.”

The philosopher did not stop to appease his hunger by catching more trout, but hurried off at once to find the little old doctor.

Guy and Lucy sat by the stream, and talked. They had countless things to say to each other; questions of happiness and duty to decide. Both were tired of acting Pyramus and Thisbe, — stealing glimpses of each other through a wall which the quarrels of their parents had reared between them, and which her relatives had driven full of the spikes of spite and jealousy. Guy, fiery and impatient, was for snatching Lucy at once from the Pinworth purgatory, and marrying her in open defiance of his father's threats of disinheritanee; a generous resolution, and perhaps the wisest. But Lucy said no.

“I remember how Colonel Bannington looked at me, — such hatred! He shall never think of me as his daughter. Besides,” she added quickly, as Guy was about to urge his vehement objection, “I know you better than you know yourself. You have no profession; you don't know any thing about getting a living; and you might regret, — in the struggles, the annoyances, which would come, — I know you would some time regret, the sacrifice. You are used to a life of ease and pleasure. And do you know, Guy, you are irritable, impulsive, and too sensitive and headstrong to endure privation and care?”

“I need the discipline,” said Guy. “I am ashamed of what I have been. You have cured me of the wildness

which has given me, I believe, a worse reputation than I deserve. But, if I lose you now, what will become of me? I tremble to think of it!”

“You will not lose me. We will simply separate for a time. I will go away, and get my living somewhere; and we will wait, and be patient.”

“Lucy, I can’t! Talk of waiting and patience, when it is heaven with you, and perdition away from you! Oh, this hand!” — he covered it with kisses: “I will never let it go, — never!”

Thrilled as she was by his passion and his rapture, still something in Lucy’s soul would not suffer her to consent to his wishes. She felt equal to any sacrifice for his sake; but she could not permit him to make sacrifices for her.

She told him this; and with her words there entered into his heart a great temptation. No way seemed so easy and pleasant to decide the question of their happiness as by one of those compromises of the absolute right which sometimes ruin both happiness and character. Could he not enjoy the blessedness of her love, and yet not forfeit his father’s good will? She heard him in silence. She did not attempt to reason against his proposal, but only begged time for consideration; dreading her own weakness and his passionate persuasion, and knowing well that safety lay, not in argument, but in flight.

VI.

THE LOVES OF ELPHAZ PELT AND
ABNER ROANE.



IN the law-office of Squire Elphaz Pelt sits the young man Abner, leaning on his elbows, and running his freckled fingers through his red hair, as if to warm them.

There are letters on the desk before him, which have come by the afternoon's mail ; in one of which — a heavy package covered with stamps, and looking as if it contained gold-dust — he manifests a grinning interest.

“That's from Californy, sure ! Ben Arlyn's writing, I bet ! I wish ” — He glances at the door, and listens ; then turns the letter over, shakes it at his ear, and tries to peep. “If I was only one of them mediums that can see into letters without opening 'em ! Hang so many wafers !”

He pushes the package aside, so as not to be tempted by it ; and, to divert his mind, takes up a thin straw-colored envelope, bearing the imprint of a well-known express-company.

Here is something, now, that might possibly be penetrated by an ingenious young man like Abner Roane. That little

streak of gluten doesn't stick like the absurd wafers that defend the Californian document. Just the moist edge of a paper-folder pressed in there carefully, and —

“ Bless my soul ! ” says Abner ; and with a start, as if his fingers were agued, he thrusts them back into his warm top-knot.

The envelope has actually shown a tendency to come open. Its lips, curling a little with the strain he has given it, grins at him. Abner grins at it. Nobody is coming. He takes up the letter again, just touches the adhesive part, and lo ! —

“ What a way to seal a letter that was ! ” says Abner nervously ; and he listens with a wild expression, holding his tongue out, and the gluten ready to be licked and stuck again in ease of footsteps.

“ I may as well just take a peep ! ” he concludes. But how the freckled fingers shake ! and how pale the sandy visage suddenly grows, forgetting for the moment to grin ! The letter is hurriedly read, and restored to the envelope ; and Abner sits trembling with the excitement of what he has done, and with fear lest Elphaz may come in before the freshly licked gluten is dry.

One would imagine it none of Abner's business that the express-company writes to say that a large sum of money has been forwarded from California by Mr. Benjamin Arlyn, consigned to his agent, Mr. Elphaz Pelt.

“ Seven thousand dollars ! ” murmurs Abner. An inde-

pendent fortune, in his eyes. It will, of course, be Lucy's; with whom he would have fallen in love long ago, could he have seen that such a step was for his interest. But who would ever have supposed that old Ben Arlyn, ruined by his lawsuits with Colonel Bannington, and flying in disgrace after his last fatal collision with that ireful man, would in two years turn up a millionaire? From a plodding law-student, Abner is suddenly transformed into the most agitated of lovers. To offer himself, and get accepted, before Lucy learns that she is an heiress, is of the utmost importance. He takes a pen, and commences a letter, which he dates yesterday, — the sagacious Abner! Then in prolix and verbose diction, as if he were drawing up a legal document, he declares his passion. The letter is scarcely sealed and pocketed, when Elphaz enters. Abner's red head is suddenly plunged into a law-book, which fascinates him like a romance.

“Go to the post-office?” inquires Elphaz, his face all gristle and no smiles, which he can't afford to lavish on his apprentice.

Abner jumps. “Oh, yes!” He gives the letters with servile alacrity, and returns to his romance.

Elphaz glances at the letters with one eye, while he seems to be suspiciously watching the absorbed youth with the other; breaks a seal or two; and laughs a hard, metallic laugh.

“Ha, ha! got a letter from — thought he was dead — didn't we hear Joe Prince was dead, Abner?”

“He died in San Francisco last winter, didn't he?”

“I thought so. But here’s a big letter from him. Can’t stop to read it now. I was in hopes ’twas from Arlyn: strange we don’t hear from him! Keep shop, Abner, till I come back.” And Elphaz, full of business, departs with the letters.

The red head emerges from the law-book, and is scratched assiduously for a wondering minute or two. “Joe Prince? Well, maybe ’tis; but I don’t believe it.” Honest Abner grows suspicious of his senior’s integrity. “He won’t dare to steal that seven thousand dollars, though! Any way, I’ll give Lucy my letter, and resk it.”

Impatient to leave the office for that purpose, he sits waiting for Pelt’s return. At length, somebody comes. Luck favors him. Instead of the lawyer, it is Lucy herself.

Pale and anxious, she inquires for Elphaz, and sinks upon a seat.

“You have no letters for me yet?”

Red-head struggles with embarrassment, simpering sweetly.

“There *is* a letter for you, Miss Arlyn.”

“O Abner!” cries Lucy eagerly, hope and joy flashing up in her weary face; and, with both hands extended, she starts forward.

Abner draws his declaration from his pocket, like a dagger, and stabs her to the heart.

“You can write your answer if you’d ruther,” he simpers; hastily pushes some paper towards her on the table; then goes and looks out of the window, rubbing his hands excitedly, while she is considering the delicate subject.

Having waited a proper length of time, he peeps over his shoulder to see what the prospects are. There she sits, not yet recovered from her cruel disappointment; regarding the letter with a countenance in which he sees written disgust, heart-sickness, and his own unhappy fate.

“May I hope for a favorable response?” is the elegant speech he has been studying up; but it sticks in his throat as he crawls obsequiously towards her.

She throws the letter on the table with a contempt she cannot conceal, but forbears to speak, feeling that the addresses of the most loathed suitor should not be met with scorn.

“My prospects are good,” whines Abner. “You’ll be able to live a lady: you never’ll need to sile this delicate white hand,” — which he attempts to squeeze.

“Abner Roane!” cries Lucy, “burn that foolish letter!” And she snatches back the unsqueezed hand.

“No hopes?” murmured the wretch.

“Not a hope!” says Lucy.

“O Miss Arlyn!” — he is getting down on his knees: but fortunately there are footsteps on the stairs; and he has barely time to crumple the rejected addresses into his pocket, and get seated, when Elphaz enters.

“Ah, Miss Lucy again!” cries the affable lawyer. “Sorry I can’t do any thing for you yet. But don’t be discouraged. California letters don’t always get along as soon as they should.”

“And you have no news whatever from my father?”

Luey asks in a low voice, but with a certain distinctness, and a steady, inquiring look.

The twinkling grayish eyes glance sharply at Abner, then appear to consult each other across the nasal bridge.

“Nothing yet, Miss Luey. But there’s time enough. Perhaps to-morrow. — Abner!” — Red-head looks up from his law-book, — “I want you to carry a copy of that deed over to the colonel right away.”

Abner puts on his extinguisher, and goes.

“Sit still, Miss Luey,” — the gristly face shining with suavity. “You look tired. Any thing I can do for you?”

Yes; she wishes to have a few words with him: and Elphaz, listening with polite attention opposite her, and Abner with unpolite curiosity at the key-hole, hear how, sick of her present mode of life, she has resolved to go to a noted manufacturing town, and find employment in the cotton-mills. What she desires of Elphaz is to forward letters to her if any are received from her father.

“But you must never think of taking any such step, my dear young lady!” remonstrates the lawyer, leaning affectionately towards her.

Lucy shakes her sorrowful head. “’Tis impossible for me to live where I do any longer; and, if I am to go out to work, I prefer to be among strangers.”

“My dearest young lady!” expostulates Elphaz with increasing affectionateness of manner, “you need never leave this town; you need never soil those beautiful hands with vulgar toil!”

Abner, sweating at the key-hole, thinks Elphaz must have listened before, and stolen some of his thunder. Pelt proceeds : —

“ I have a hand, a fortune, and a ” — he seems to hesitate about making the unimportant addition — “ a heart, dearest Lucy, which I humbly offer you ! ”

Abner groans dreadfully in spirit ; for, when Pelt woos, what chance is there for Roane ?

But what does he hear ? She rejects even the great lawyer ! She declines to become Mrs. Elphaz ! What balm to Abner’s wounds ! He has heard enough. He slips away. Chuckle, red-head ! and run also ; for danger cometh.

Pelt, hearing a noise, opens the door, and glances down the stairs in time to see a vanishing trousers-leg ; insufficient evidence, however, to convict of eaves-dropping. Closing the door again, he locks it.

“ Let me go, Mr. Pelt ! ” commands Lucy.

“ My dearest young lady ! ” says Elphaz, who has great confidence in his power to plead a cause, only give him a chance, “ don’t be alarmed, but hear me ! ”

And with one hand under his coat-tail, gesticulating with the other, and bending persuasively forward, he proceeds with a speech, as if he were addressing gentlemen of the jury, and looking at several of them at once. He makes an elaborate statement of the advantages she will reap by marrying him, and having servants to bring her water to wash her hands ; and of the folly she will commit, and misery she will incur,

by persisting in her refusal. Irresistible logic; but Lucy is a woman, and logic never convinced a woman yet.

“You have forced me to listen to you,” she replies, as the advocate folds his gesticulating hand with its fellow under his coat-tails, and smilingly waits for a triumphant verdict in his favor. “My answer is the same as before. Now let me go; for I am tired and sick!”

The legal countenance changes, and grows grim with the thought of starving the jury into rendering a different verdict. But he thinks better of it, and concludes to give a specimen of the indulgent husband Nature designed him to be; offers to advance her money, which she refuses; and finally, with theatrical fondness of manner, opens the door to her.

Almost weeping with vexation at these insults, Lucy hurries away. Thank Heaven, she has heard the last of them. But no: there stands Abner on the bridge; who, as she approaches, removes his extinguisher, and relumes himself redly in the sun.

“Don’t stop me!” she entreats. “I am so sick of it all, Abner!”

But Abner has a grand diplomatic stroke to try; having resolved to sell Pelt for a villain, and himself for a traitor, if any bid will be made.

“Miss Arlyn,” — painfully plaiting up his face, — “I know something that will be greatly to your advantage to hear” —

“I have already heard too many things greatly to my advantage!” observes Lucy.

“But this is positive,—an immense advantage, pecuniarily speaking. But I can't afford to let you into the secret without some consideration in my favor: that is,” says Abner, “if you'll reverse your decision, and become” — with an embarrassed giggle — “Mrs. Roane, I can put a fortune into your hands.”

“And into yours?” retorts Lucy, sarcastic and incredulous.

“I don't deny but I may have been interested,” Abner confesses; “but” —

“Not for fifty fortunes would I become Mrs. Roane!” interrupts Lucy. “Now, if you know any secret that I ought to be made acquainted with, tell it like a man, and I'll thank you.”

“I — re'lly” — Abner puts on his hat, and two flames appear to be extinguished — “I ain't so green as to give you my secret on any such terms, Miss Arlyn. It's cost me something, and it'll cost me a good deal more, to come out for you against — no matter who, since you're so offish;” and Abner is “offish” too.

At this critical moment in Lucy's fortunes, a third person, coming to the bridge, puts an end to the conference. It is Archy. Abner retreats: Lucy remains.

The genius has not come to urge his suit in opposition to Elphaz and Abner, but to bring her a letter.

“From Guy!” cries Lucy, surprised.

After the long talk in the woods, and their many last words

at parting, scarcely two hours ago, he has still something to say to her. For love is infinite; and, pour it out as we may in the channels of language, the fountain is always full and running over.

The letter seems to glow in Lucy's hand. She hides it, and addresses the genius; so kindly, and yet so sadly, that tears come into the eyes that worship her.

“Archy, I am going away, to-morrow morning, in the early train. I want you to help me. Come to the house at five: nobody will be up then. I am going alone, — all alone, Archy.”

She attempts to say more, but her tears rush up; and, giving the genius her hand, she hurries away, and leaves him, dumb with distress, standing on the bridge.

Little cares she now for the cross looks of Sophy and her mother. A greater trial overshadows the less. She lifts her eyes above the petty briers that annoy her, to the drearily sighing tree of desolation which seems to fill the sky of her future. In the bleakness and gloom, with tremor and heart-ache, she reads Guy's letter. Such love! — and she must put it from her! Such happiness reaching to embrace her! — and she must fly from it! Such tender entreaties, passionate appeals! — and her heart must seem cruel and deaf! “I know,” he writes, “that your deep woman's heart will keep you true to me;” and, when next he hears from her, she will be gone! Oh! has she not deceived him wickedly? What despair will be his! What utter loneliness will be hers!

“Guy, Guy, I cannot leave you! God help me, I cannot!” And she covers his letter with kisses. But, after the wild outburst, her resolution and calm thoughts come back to her like guardian angels, soothing and counselling.

The certainty of his disinheritance if they are openly united; his habits and temper, that unfit him for a life of labor and privation; the prophecy of her heart that he will some day regret the sacrifice, if she permits him to make it; the instinctive repugnance to a secret intercourse and a life of deception felt by all true souls; the faith she has that time will untie the knot of difficulty that entangles them, if they will but wait, — all this comes up again: but, more than all this, something within or above impels her, — a magnet, as it were, in the very core of her will; and, stronger than the confused counsels of reason and desire, a still small voice whispers continually, “Fly, fly, from this temptation!”

Lost in this whirl of thoughts, she quite forgets Abner, and the fortune she has missed; Pelt and his proposals; but not her father. Oh, could she but go now to his bosom, — large and rugged and strong, but tender as a mother’s, — cling to his neck, put her cheek against his dear rough beard, and cry out her troubles in his infolding arms! Or, since that cannot be, if she only had to console her that big, badly spelled, tumultuously fond letter that came this day, enclosed to Elphaz, the ashes of which are, at this moment, crumbling in the draught of the lawyer’s office stove!

VII.

FLIGHT.



UT, motherless and fatherless as Lucy feels, her aunt is still left her.

That strait-laced Pharisee comes to her room at dusk.

“ Well, miss ! this is pretty conduct ! Traipsing round all day, and now coming off here to mope ! Where have you been ? ”

No response from Lucy : her heart is ice. “ Answer me, then ! ” And Mrs. Pinworth grasps her arm with a vigor of clutch which leaves black rings imprinted.

Aroused by the pain, “ I will answer you ! ” cries Lucy, “ once for all, ” — flashing back her indignation through the dusk, — “ you wicked, cruel woman ! ”

“ What ? you call me ” — A violent shake of the grasped arm rounds the sentence.

Lucy feels a momentary impulse to stick her scissors into the Pinworth wrist. She restrains it, however : she will speak scissors, but use none.

“I call you what you are! You know it is true: you know you have been wicked and cruel to me!”

“This,” gasps the astonished lady, “after all I have done for you!”

“What have you done? Have you kept your promise to my father?—my poor father, who is so good himself, he thinks every one is a saint that seems so! You were to be a mother to me; but what a mother!”

“Lucy!—Lucy!—how dare you” —

“If anybody needed kindness, or longed to repay it with love, I did,” — and, at the recollection, Lucy bursts into tears. “Oh! why did you make me hate you? I would have been your slave, if you would only have been kind to me. But oh! you have been so harsh, so cruel, so unjust!”

“Ungrateful!” Mrs. Pinworth articulates, between fury and alarm.

“Haven’t I worked for you?” answers Lucy. “And didn’t my father give you more money than I have ever cost you? Do I owe you for any thing but injuries? Oh! and you might have made me love you!” she adds in a voice that has less anger in it than sharp pain and regret.

At that, down goes the Pinworth relict on her knees to chastise her niece before the Lord in prayer. Lucy can’t stand that.

“You are not a Christian, Aunt Pinworth. You don’t do as you would be done by. You don’t love anybody but yourself. You are without charity. Your prayers are wicked

prayers, and I won't hear them!" She thrusts her fingers in her ears: a needless precaution, however; for Mrs. Pinworth, unaccustomed to having the truth dashed into her teeth so defiantly, is too strongly agitated, and perhaps self-convicted, to go through with the intended mockery. She begins to weep. Lucy is touched. "Yes, yes, you may pray, I will hear you," she adds, relenting. "Oh! if you would only pray with me as my mother used to pray! I need such prayers, I am so weak, so unhappy!"

Within the nut of the hardest heart some human juices may be found, if you can only crack it. Lucy, without knowing it, has pierced the Pinworth shell. The rude truth she has spoken could not alone have done it; but LOVE, which gives truth its greatest power, — LOVE, which burns and yearns deep down in Lucy's soul, and struggles up through every thing, — LOVE has done the work.

"You have misunderstood me, we have misunderstood each other," the widow falters. "Perhaps I am not a Christian; but God knows I mean to be!" with a burst of sincerity in her tones, which gives Lucy a new insight into human character, and teaches her charity.

It flashes upon her in an instant, that the worst hypocrite is not all hypocrisy, nor the worst villain all villainy; but self-deception, fancied necessity, the entanglement of circumstances, betray them into wrong when they wish to do right. In order to judge them, we must learn to see them as they see themselves, which only God can do, and such generous

and sympathetic souls as have the spirit of God. Lucy repents of having judged her aunt ; and there, humbly, tearfully, by the light of the rising moon that shines into the chamber, she asks forgiveness for that fault, unintentionally dropping fresh coals upon Mrs. Pinworth's head.

In order truly to humble others, we must be humble ourselves ; to conquer, we must be self-conquered ; to melt stony hearts, ours must be full of melting fire. The aunt stands trembling and pale in the moonlight.

“ Forgive *me*, Luey ! I know I have done wrong : we can't always do right. When I can pray with you, I will ; not now. Don't you want some supper ? ” she asks with unwonted kindness.

“ I don't care for any : I can't go down now, ” answers the niece, looking out upon the moonlit world.

Mrs. Pinworth is gone ; and there, by the window, Luey musing sits, until, to her utter astonishment, the door is again opened, and her aunt returns, bringing a lamp, with cake and pie on a plate.

“ You'd better eat something, Luey. ” And, setting down the things, Mrs. Pinworth retires again, silently, and with something of her old dignity.

Luey's impulse is to call her back, and tell her all ; but she hears Sophy's voice.

“ I never saw such a fool as you are, mother ! — carrying supper up to that selfish, lazy thing ! She don't deserve any supper ! ”

Which decides her to keep her own counsel, and perform in silence and secrecy what she has resolved.

The long night ; the preparation for the journey ; the sighs, the thoughts of love, the prayers ; the stars setting, the day rising, the suffering soul still watching, — why dwell upon all this ?

Joyously as ever sang the first bird under Lucy's window. Clear and sweet and silvery was the dawn ; and, at the coming of the sun, all the angels of light and color flew before to curtain and carpet his way.

Lucy's resolution was not like the sun, but resembled more the wan and crumbled disk of the old moon, fading to a sickly film over the way she was to go. Yet that way lay her destiny. She had ceased to reason or resist : follow she must that sad and pallid face ; though love pursued her like the greater orb, all life and fire.

Looking from the window, she saw Archy waiting for orders by the garden fence. At a sign from her, he came upon the piazza. There she met him, dressed for her journey, and bringing out her travelling effects, all contained in a band-box and bag. The genius took them from her. They departed in silence. Farewell to the Pinworth household — forever !

“ O Archy ! ” said Lucy, — something like a throb of joy thrilling her when the ir retrievable step was taken, and she walked free under the morning sky, — “ if our flying-machine was only ready ! Wouldn't we dash up into the delicious ether ; bathe our heads in the sunshine, like eagles ; float off

on that silver sea, Archy, among those fiery islands; and, if we should ever wish to come down, look out for some country where it is always morning!"

Although his invention had never been made to appear so poetical before, Archy did not smile.

"But," said Lucy, "I suppose cars and carriages must answer till you get out your patent. What makes you so sober, Archy?"

"I hate to have you go, the wust kind!" said the genius, brimful of grief. "I'd ruther give any thing!"

"O Archy! I believe you are the best boy in the world! I'd stay if I could, if only to please you. What are you stopping for? We've no time to spare. Let me take the band-box."

"Oh, no!" The genius held it between his feet. "I can carry 'em."

"Then don't stop. Oh, you mean to make me lose the cars, Archy!"

"No, I don't; not if you're bent on goin'. I—I wish" He was feeling in his pocket, — for his handkerchief, Lucy thought; but he brought out instead an old leather purse. "I got a little money, — not much. I don't want it; and I'll be much obleeged to you if you'll take it off my hands."

"O Archy! don't make me cry! God bless you, Archy! but I have saved a little money for this very journey."

"Maybe you won't have enough: you've got to take it!" And he tried to hang the purse on her wrist.

“No, no: I can’t, Archy. You will want it more than I shall: there, put it up.” Lucy insisted; and reluctantly the genius returned the leathern receptacle with its small cash contents to his pocket.

He snuffled a little, used his sleeve, and took up the luggage. They walked on in silence. Suddenly he stopped again, with a startled look, his mouth open, as if he had forgotten something.

“I’m afraid I done wrong!”

“You, Archy? You couldn’t do wrong.”

“Guy wanted to see me arter I brought you the letter last night. I didn’t think but that he knowed; and I’m afraid I told him” —

“That I was going this morning?” cried Lucy.

“Not exactly that; but you see, when he got hold of me, he wanted to know jest how you looked, and what you said, and every thing; and wouldn’t let me go nohow till I had told him sumpthin’. I couldn’t help it: I’m real sorry,” said the genius regretfully, observing Lucy’s alarm. “I hope ’twon’t be no harm.”

“I hope not. Come!” She caught up the handbox, and hurried him away, looking eagerly before and behind, thrilling at the thought of Guy, fearing he might appear to intercept her, and yet, despite her soul, almost hoping he would.

“That’s the whistle!” said Archy.

“His whistle?” was her first thought, remembering his

well-known signal to his dogs. But no : it was the approaching train, uttering its wild scream of warning from afar.

“ I am glad ! Oh, you must help me now ! ”

She almost ran. The railroad station was near. They bustled in : a ticket was bought ; the bag was checked ; the train arrived. In a whirl of excitement, Lucy stepped aboard. Archy handed her the band-box, and they shook hands. How breathlessly it all happened !

“ Good-by, Archy ! ” and she disappeared in the car.

The train started, and Archy stood staring mournfully after her ; when sudden bounding footsteps were heard, and a form rushed swiftly past, chasing the cars, catching an iron hand-rail, and, with a vigorous leap and swing, alighting safely upon the platform.

It was Guy Bannington.

VIII.

THE HOUSEKEEPER'S STORY.—DOCTOR
BIDDIKIN.

T nine o'clock that morning, Aaron Burble was dressing Colonel Bannington ; Aaron's wife was shelling green pease in the kitchen ; and Archy, sitting in the door, was watching her, with his pocket-knife open, his mouth ditto, and his mind vaguely oscillating between Lucy and a patent pea-sheller.

"If the colonel don't want ye, Archy," observed Mrs. Burble in a confidential whisper, "I'll tell ye what we'll do. Soon as Ann Mari' comes back, and Aaron gits away (for Aaron is dead set against her being a medium), we'll have another little circle. Jest help me shell these pease, and we'll be all ready."

"Ma says she's afraid to have me set in circles ; thinks it'll hurt me. I told her how we sot" —

"Oh !" said the housekeeper, "there's Aaron !" at sight of whom the subject was judiciously dropped, and the two sat silently intent upon opening the innocent pea-pods.

“I’ve got him into his chair: if he want’s you, he’ll ring,” Aaron said to Archy, and disappeared.

“He hates wus’n pizon to hear a word about sperits,” whispered Mrs. Burble, looking up slyly. “He won’t be back much ’fore noon, I guess; and we’ll have a re’l comfortable time on’t. Here comes Ann Mari’!”

A red-cheeked girl of thirteen came running in, bringing a bag of groceries and a budget of news.

“Only think, mother!” she cried breathlessly: “Lucy Arlyn has run away!”

“Why, Ann Mari’, how you talk!”

“Yes; and Mrs. Pinworth feels dreadfully! She went to her room this morning, and found her gone: she took with her lots of things, and left nothing but a letter to say good-by. And, don’t you think! Jenkins at the depot says he see Guy jump on to the same cars she took, jest as they had started; and it’s all over the village how they’ve gone off together!”

“Massy sakes!” said Mrs. Burble, “won’t this be a nice mess for Colonel Bannington to hear! He hates the Arlyns so like — You’re spillin’ the pease, Archy!”

Arousing from his stupor, the genius righted his dish.

“I don’t see what makes him: I don’t see how anybody can hate her,” he murmured.

“Her father and the colonel was great friends once, you know,” said the housekeeper; “and I believe it always happens, that, when friends quarrel, they spite each other wus’n as if they’d always been enemies.”

“What made ’em ever quarrel?”

“That I don’t know; and I guess they never knowed themselves. Bannington got Arlyn to come and take charge of his farming business; and for a long time they was jest like a couple o’ brothers. But” — in a cautious whisper — “the colonel’s got an awful temper: I guess you’ve found that out! Arlyn was quick too, and high-sperited: he couldn’t stand nobody’s domineerin’ ways. So you see ’twan’t in natur’ ’t them two should git along together; and, when they did fall out, ’twas like flint and steel, and the fire flew. Arlyn took a miff, and quit short off in the middle of summer: that madded the colonel. They couldn’t agree about a settlement; and so they went to law. Most folks thought Arlyn was in the right on’t; but Bannington had the most money, and he kep’ the law-suits goin’, carryin’ on ’em up from one court to another, till bime-by there was a final judgment. It went against Arlyn, and it jest broke him all to pieces. He’s a great, strong, big-hearted man; but I once see him cry like a child, talkin’ about it. He wouldn’t mind the loss of his property, he said, only for Lucy’s sake; and he couldn’t speak her name without chokin’ right up, as if his very heart was broke. It’ll be the dreadfulest blow of all when he hears of this.”

“Of course, Guy’ll marry her,” said the simple-hearted genius.

But Mrs. Burble shook her sagacious head.

“A young man that thinks as much of dogs and bosses

and good times as he does won't be apt to give 'em up for any girl: though I believe Lucy is good enough for him, any day; and they've always been partial to each other. But the colonel" —

"He thinks Mr. Arlyn give him them bad legs," suggested Archy.

"I know something about that. You remember, all Arlyn's property was seized; and, with the rest, a colt he sot every thing by. Jest to spite him, the colonel bid in the colt, and used to ride it. One day, Arlyn was in the village, and went to cross the street. It was wet and muddy; and, jest as he got half-way aerost, who should come along but the colonel on that very colt, dancing and prancing in fine style, and spatterin' Arlyn all over from head to foot.

"'You better take care!' says Arlyn, says he; for he wouldn't stir out of his way for any thing under heavens. He stood with his fists doubled. 'Prince!' says he to the colt, 'don't ye know me?'

"But the colt kep' kind o' backin' around, and caperin' sideways, as you know some hosses will; till bime-by the colonel's boot hit Arlyn's arm. The colonel always said he didn't mean to; but, whether he did or not, that was enough for Ben Arlyn. My husband he was the fust to run and dick up the colonel: he says it happened jest like a flash. The colt was gallopin' away with the empty saddle; the colonel was a-lyin' on the ground, jest where he had been flung; and Arlyn he was walkin' away like a king o' the

'arth. He's a large, tall man, ye know; and with his blood up, and fists doubled, you can imagine nobody das' to touch him.

"Aaron helped git the colonel home. He didn't seem to be much hurt, though he was stunted at fust; but he was the excitedest man! And the consequence was, he had that stroke of paralysis; and waked up the next morning, as he says, with a couple of sticks o' wood in bed with him 'stid of legs. But come now, we're all ready, and le's have that settin' 'fore Aaron comes."

Mrs. Burble made haste to dispose of the pease, and prepare for the comfortable time she anticipated. Just then, the colonel's bell jingled. Archy was wanted; and, to the grievous disappointment of the spiritual-minded housekeeper, it became necessary to postpone intercourse with the higher spheres till a more convenient season.

"I feel as though we should have a setting yet this forenoon," said Ann Maria; "and that somebody is going to come."

"Is it an impression?" her mother asked.

Ann Maria "guessed so;" and, whatever it was, it received a remarkable fulfilment about half an hour afterwards.

A rickety old chaise, with a torn and faded top, drawn by a raw-boned white horse, drew up at the foot of the avenue. There it stopped, and two persons got out. One of them, a shrivelled and seedy little old man, advanced briskly into the garden.

“Colonel Bannington, how do you do?” he cried with an air of great vivacity, grasping the invalid’s hand.

“Why didn’t you drive in, doctor?” asked the colonel with icy sarcasm.

The seedy little man smiled a droll smile, serewed up his face, and put his hands together with the air of one accustomed to keeping up an appearance of gayety and fine manners on a very small capital.

“The truth is, I’ve a borrowed horse; and my vehiele isn’t quite so elegant as it might be: but I’ve seen better times, — *you* can say that for me, colonel.”

The paralytic, glancing up cynically at the chattering little old man, looked like a modern Diogenes in a wheeled tub. “What!” he said, “haven’t you dug up your money yet?”

“Well, no, not yet,” pleasantly replied the doctor: “I’m very near it, though, — very near it. Here’s a gentleman that can tell you something about it. Colonel Bannington, my friend Mr. Murk, the philanthropist.”

Mr. Murk, the philanthropist, offered to shake hands; a civility which Diogenes did not notice, or did not choose to reciprocate.

“Ha! a suffering brother!” observed Mr. Murk, not in the least disconcerted; and he proceeded to manipulate the colonel’s legs, while the colonel’s eyes blazed.

“Hem!” coughed the little doctor, with his thumbs joined, rising upon his toes: “we have come on what you will call a very singular errand, Colonel Bannington. This

gentleman has been told all about that treasure of mine by invisible intelligences, — you know what I mean, — the spirits !”

Diogenes gave a snort of contempt.

Mr. Murk, the philanthropist, not at all discouraged, then began to thwack his breast with his fists, and make solemn grimaces ; whereat Archy, looking on, suddenly exploded with a sense of the grotesque.

“ It is very singular : don’t you think so, colonel ? The spirits have told him that there are two mediums in the neighborhood which we must consult. I said I believed there were one in your kitchen : were I right ?” And the doctor, with his puny arms folded primly across his epitome of an abdomen, bent over genteelly, with a twist of his long, lean neck, which brought that eager, skinny, smirking face of his into disagreeable proximity with the colonel’s.

“ Doctor Biddikin !” exclaimed the latter with immense disgust, “ do you believe that stuff ?”

“ Ah ! I — I’m not wholly prepared to believe it !” cried Biddikin, catching his cue from the colonel. “ They can’t blame us for being sceptical, — old settlers like you and me, Colonel Bannington ! But there can’t be much harm in investigating, can there, do you think ? Accordingly, I consented to come and see if Maria — I think that’s her name — can tell us any thing ; with your permission, of course, colonel !” — deferentially, and with a tendency to rise upon the toes.

“ I won't hinder you,” snarled the colonel ; “ but you are hindering me. Take away that wind-mill ! ” meaning Mr. Murk, the philanthropist.

Doctor Biddikin, disguising his chagrin, if he felt any, under an airy exterior, rubbed his hands, and smiled his droll smile.

“ Ah, ha ! well said ! — Come, Mr. Murk ! ”

Mr. Murk stood before the chair, imperturbable, with his right arm extended, and his eyes closed.

“ This individual,” he said, indicating Diogenes, “ can be made to arise and walk ; but he has not sufficient faith : therefore we shall not be able to do any thing for him at this time.” And, like one suddenly awaking, he winked his fishy eyes, looked round with a dry smile, and walked off with Doctor Biddikin to find Ann Maria.

Archy had to work hard during the next quarter of an hour to wheel the colonel into good-humor. This task was hardly accomplished when Dr. Biddikin re-appeared, bare-headed, bowing and smirking.

“ Beg a thousand pardons, Colonel Bannington ! But could you spare us this young man a few minutes ? ”

“ Halt ! ” said Diogenes sharply. The tub stood still ; and, turning his grim white face, he measured the doctor's meagre anatomy with jeering and sparkling malice. “ What was your cool remark, Doctor Cucumber ? ”

“ I'm not responsible,” that seedy vegetable hastened to say : “ it were rapped out by the alphabet, ‘ *Have Archy present : he is a medium.* ’ ”

“Are you a medium, Archy?”

“No, not as I know on!” said Archy sheepishly. “Only I sot with Miss Burble and Ann Mari’ twice, and sumpthin’ jerked my arms like sixty: I d’n’ know what ’twas!”

“Couldn’t you stop the jerking?”

“No! no more’n nothin’!” exclaimed Archy, with a face honest enough even for the supicious eyes of the colonel.

“That were certainly very singular!” said Doctor Biddikin. “I’m very anxious to investigate! Shall Archy come?”

“Yes,” answered the colonel, showing his teeth; “and I’ll come too!” he added, to the great surprise and consternation of Doctor Biddikin. And, to the still greater consternation of Mrs. Burble, he was wheeled to the dining-room, and placed in the midst of the circle around the table.

“I don’t hear any thing yet from my son,” the doctor said aside to the colonel.

“I should think you’d be damned glad you don’t,” the colonel said aside to the doctor.

“It’s a great trial to me to have him gone,” remarked Biddikin sympathetically.

“It was a still greater trial to have him at home, I should think,” answered Bannington cynically. “I swear, I believe I never saw you yet but you had something to say about your troubles with that precious rascal!”

“His conduct has well-nigh broken my heart!” sighed the doctor. “This continued anxiety — I’m in hopes, if there

be any thing in spiritualism, that I may hear something about him."

"All please to set up near, and put your hands on the table," said Mrs. Burble, recovering her equanimity.

Archy giggled. Mr. Murk thwacked his breast, and informed the company that Swedenborg was present. Ann Maria, bending over the table, inquired if Swedenborg would rap.

No response.

"Are there *any* sperits here that will rap?" asked Mrs. Burble, spreading her large arms on the table, and turning her ear to listen. Hearing nothing, she naturally placed her mouth near the surface, on which the raps were expected to come, and called in a louder key, "Any sperits here?"

"Are they deaf? or are they supposed to be somewhere in the cellar?" said the colonel aside to Doctor Biddikin.

"I don't know, I'm sure!" replied the doctor, embarrassed between his desire to appear affable and the fear of seeming irreverent.

Mrs. Burble, intent on calling the spirits, and quite unconscious of the ludicrous inconsistency of shouting *down* to them, put her mouth close to the table, and in a louder voice exclaimed, —

"Swedenborg!"

Mr. Murk's arm jerked; but there was no rap.

"Swedenborg!" cried Mrs. Burble: "be you here?"

"He is in the refrigerator, or covered up in the potato-

bin," said the colonel. "Scream louder, Rhody, and you'll fetch him!" A playful suggestion, which threw the good woman into confusion.

"There ain't harmony in the circle," observed Ann Maria.

Mr. Murk, the philanthropist, whose fist kept wagging in the air, then remarked that Swedenborg was in his arm, but that he would soon leave it, and go to the table.

"We had very distinct raps before you came, colonel," said Doctor Biddikin. "Suppose you take the alphabet."

IX.

A SPIRITUAL CIRCLE.



SOILED spelling-book was placed before the colonel, who took a pencil, and commenced pointing at the A B C's like a schoolmaster.

He went over them twice without success; but the occupation fixed his mind for the moment, and it favored silence.

“There's more harmony now,” said Ann Maria; “a better influence. Don't you feel it, mother?”

“Oh, yes! I guess I do! There was a rap!”

Colonel Bannington held his pencil on the letter F, and the rap was distinctly repeated, — a small, soft, concussive sound, on or under the mahogany, apparently very near the colonel's hand. Startled by what he evidently did not expect, he looked up keenly at Ann Maria; whose face, to his disappointment, betrayed no guile, but was full of lively, girlish interest.

“Is F right?” asked Mrs. Burble.

A little pattering of the same small, soft, concussive sounds, like a dry rain, all around the colonel's hand, was considered

a very decided affirmative response. F was accordingly taken down on a sheet of foolscap by Doctor Biddikin, who acted as scribe.

The invalid, slightly agitated, but far from losing his shrewd sense, called for a sheet of paper, which he placed over the alphabet in a manner to conceal it from all mortal eyes but his own ; then recommenced pointing. Rap !

“ E,” said he a moment after to Doctor Biddikin. Immediately there was another rap, — at A. But, instead of repeating the letter, he went through the alphabet, and, coming back, began again at B. No rap. C — D — E: still no sound. But, the instant his pencil touched A, the rap was repeated. The intelligence and persistence thus shown in the rap-producing power damped his marble forehead with perspiration.

“ Ann !” said he, once more flashing his steel-gray eyes upon the medium, “ can you see the letters I point at ?”

“ No, sir,” replied the girl with simple earnestness. “ If you think I do, you needn’t pint at ’em at all, but go over ’em in your mind. They’ll rap jest the same that way for some folks.”

Bannington accordingly discarded the pencil, and fixed his eyes on the alphabet, which he still kept concealed from the company. A rap ; and, after some hesitation, T was announced. H, E, and R were afterwards given in the same manner. Then the sounds ceased. The colonel, who had lost the run of the letters, called on Doctor Biddikin for the result.

“The word *feather*,” said the doctor, showing his serawl.

“*Feather!*” echoed the colonel, seeming greatly relieved.

“Not a very ghostly communication, doctor. Feather — in whose cap?” And he flung the paper contemptuously on the table.

“Is *feather* right?” quietly inquired Ann Maria. Two raps, — a negative response. “Which letter is wrong? The first?” — No. “Second?” — Yes. “Try again for the second letter?” — Yes.

The colonel consented to make another trial, and got A.

“Are there two A’s?” asked Ann Maria. — No.

“Then the word is *father!*” cried Doctor Biddikin excitedly.

“Yes, yes, yes!” came the decided affirmative raps.

The colonel snatched the record, and studied it; astounded by the ingenious amendment of a word, which, a moment since, he felt certain had been spelled out by the merest chance.

“I were quite sure,” cried Doctor Biddikin, “that the knock came before you got to E; and you pointed very fast, you remember.”

The invalid made no answer, but regarded intently the sheet of foolscap, his forehead damp again.

“Is it Mr. Bannington’s father?” asked Ann Maria.

Rap, rap, rap!

“Were your father in your mind, colonel?” asked Doctor Biddikin, who had picked up somewhere a theory that

communications of that kind were reflections from somebody's brain.

The colonel compressed his narrow lips. "I wasn't thinking of my father at all," he said; "and I no more believe it's my father than I believe Swedenborg is in Mr. Murk's arm. If the spirit—if 'tis a spirit—will tell me a few things, maybe I'll begin to think there's something in it. I want first the spirit's name in full."

Jubilant affirmative raps promised loudly to grant this reasonable request. They ceased; and no more sounds could be obtained, although the colonel sat for several minutes with his eyes on the spelling-book. The truth was, that he neglected to put his mind upon the alphabet, thinking the raps might come the same.

"Look out, Archy!" whispered Ann Maria.

"Keep still, Archy!" commanded the colonel.

"I can't!" cried Archy, jerking his arms violently. "Sumpthin's got hold of me!" and he began to pound the table in a fearful manner.

"There's a very powerful battery in the circle," said Mr. Murk, the philanthropist, with a phlegmatic drawl; "very powerful."

"I never sor any thing so extraordinary!" ejaculated Bid-dikin.

"You will see stranger things than this," dryly prophesied Mr. Murk. "The other one, there, will begin next,"—fixing his steady eyes, with a dull fire in them, on Ann Maria,

and slowly waving his hands, as if throwing over her some spell.

Presently she began to jerk, and pound the table, in company with Archy.

“Now you’ll see manifestations!” and Mr. Murk calmly folded his arms, looking on with a stolid smile. “There are our two mediums, doctor.”

“Very singular!” aspirated Biddikin. “Is there no danger?—Don’t it hurt your hands?” to the mediums.

“No; but, by gosh!” broke forth Archy in a shaken voice, “I wish I could stop!”

There was now observable a striking uniformity between the movements of the two mediums. Archy’s arms would jerk, then Ann Maria’s would jerk similarly. Archy’s head would toss up and down, and Ann Maria’s would toss up and down. Then they beat a tattoo on the table, so exactly together, that a listener would have supposed that only one pair of hands was in motion.

“Bandage their eyes, and see if they’ll do that as well!” commanded the colonel.

“’Twill make no difference,” observed Mr. Murk; while Mrs. Burblo blindfolded Ann Maria; and Doctor Biddikin, Archy. “This thing has its use. There is perfect harmony between them now. You can have almost any manifestation you want.”

Archy at that moment clapped his hands, and shouted; at which Ann Maria also clapped, and, jumping up, ran, blind-

fold as she was, out of the dining-room, and through two other rooms, returning immediately with the great family Bible in her hands.

“That girl never knowed where that Bible was in this world!” exclaimed the amazed mother.

Ann Maria flung it upon the table with a heavy jar; and Archy, seizing it, turned over the leaves like lightning, ran his hand up a page, and stopped, with his finger fixed.

“It’s the family record!” said the awe-struck doctor.

“See where his finger is!” uttered the colonel, his face pallid and wet, and his voice husky.

Biddikin adjusted his glasses with trembling hands; but, before he could speak, both the mediums cried out with one breath, —

“*Lucius Bannington!*”

The doctor got his finger on the spot where Archy’s was, and, drawing the book towards him, read, —

“*Lucius Bannington*, born Sept. 2, 1770; died Oct. 5” —

Here he was interrupted by a shout from Archy.

“The record lies! *Lucius Bannington* didn’t die: I’m alive now, and hearty! Don’t you believe it?” with which words the obsessed youth made a lunge at the colonel, swung him round in his chair, and fell to slapping and rubbing his legs with demoniac fury.

“Take him away!” gasped the terrified invalid.

“Let him work,” coolly countermanded Mr. Murk.

“He’ll cure that paralysis: I’ve seen hundreds of such cases,” he added, stoical as stone in the midst of the general consternation.

“He’s fainting!” shrieked little Doctor Biddikin, springing to support the colonel; who, overcome by superstitious terrors, sank down insensible in his chair.

Archy desisted from operating on the legs, and, walking gravely aside, sat down upon a lounge; while Mrs. Burble brought a camphor-bottle, and assisted Doctor Biddikin to restore the invalid to consciousness.

“There! Take away that stuff! I’m all right!”

“Will you go to your room?” asked the frightened house-keeper.

“No: I’ll see it through. Sit down!” said the colonel.

“Shall I dror you to the table again?” asked Doctor Biddikin; and, without waiting for an answer, he wheeled up the chair. “That were your father, Colonel Bannington! Don’t you think so?”

Bannington wiped his forehead, and sat silent. The circle was formed again, omitting Archy. Ann Maria, having taken the handkerchief from her eyes and come out of her abnormal condition, answered with surprising calmness and innocence of manner, that, if all would be passive, the raps would presently be heard again.

“Shall I take the alphabet?” said the little doctor, eagerly seizing it as he spoke; his shrivelled and starved features lighting up with an unwholesome flush.

“ Any sperits here that will rap to the doctor ? ” said Mrs. Burble.

Instantly there came a loud thump, as if some one had struck the table. The doctor, wildly excited, looked round, suspicious that somebody was playing him a trick.

“ Colonel — Colonel Bannington ! ” he spluttered, “ that were a boot : you kicked the table ! ” forgetting, in the heat of the moment, the colonel’s paralysis. “ Beg pardon ! I — were it a rap ? ”

“ ’Twas the loudest rap I ever heard ! ” said Ann Maria : “ wa’n’t it mother ? ”

“ I guess it was ! ” exclaimed Mrs. Burble emphatically. “ Ask any thing you want to, doctor. ”

“ I — I want them to tell me about that money. ”

Thump, thump, thump ! came three loud knocks, which made the table shake.

“ I — I confess — I’m too excited to — I wish you’d ask questions for me, ” said the doctor to Ann Maria, — like a weak, frightened, old-faced child of sixty appealing for help to a grave little woman of thirteen.

With quiet self-reliance, Ann Maria said, —

“ Sperits please to give their names ? ”

Knock, knock, knock !

“ Take a pencil, and pint, if you please. ”

With a shaky hand, the doctor went over the alphabet. There was a knock at M ; then at A ; then at D ; the doctor growing more and more agitated, and at length, as the next letter — I — was given, crying out prematurely, —

“Madison! — is the name Madison?”

Thump, thump, thump!

“My son! — it is my son Madison!” exclaimed the doctor, jumping up from the table. “Colonel, it is my son, — my Madison!” elapsing his skinny hands, and bursting into tears.

His passion soon spent itself, and he was prevailed upon to be seated again.

“I don’t believe Madison is dead,” said Ann Maria in a consolatory tone.

“What! not if he is here and says so?” said the little doctor. “Madison, my son, are you present?”

If Madison made the resounding affirmative knocks that followed, he was present most certainly.

“Will you tell us where you died?” asked Ann Maria, inclined to refute him.

“At sea,” was spelled out.

“What were the cause of your death?” inquired the bereaved parent.

“Drowned,” said the raps.

“Are you happy, my son?”

“Jolly!”

“That sounds jest like him for all the world!” said Mrs. Burble.

“In what sphere are you, my son?”

“Seventh sphere!” exclaimed Mrs. Burble, counting the knocks. “How he has progressed! That’s the highest sphere there is!”

“He were a wonderful spiri’chal-minded boy, though bad influences here kept him down. You have better companions now, my son, haven’t you?”

“Perfect bricks!” spelled out the spiritual-minded boy.

“I — I were never pleased with his slang phrases,” said the doctor, chagrined. “Mr. Murk, do you think a spirit in the seventh sphere would make use of that low expression, — ‘perfect bricks’?”

“These things have their uses,” replied Mr. Murk. “The spirit resumes its former character in order to give you tests of its identity.”

“Very philosophical!” said the doctor; and, with returning enthusiasm, he proceeded with the communications.

Colonel Bannington, in the mean while, had his attention occupied by other things. On the lounge sat Archy, still acted upon by mysterious influences; now appearing to take snuff, bent over like a feeble old man; wiping his eyes with Doctor Biddikin’s handkerchief, while his hand seemed shaking with the palsy of age; and lastly imitating, in movement and attitude, an octogenarian carefully feeling his chin, and plucking out his beard, a hair at a time, with forceps.

“Jest look!” whispered Mrs. Burble. “Ann Mari’, do see Archy! It’s old Mr. Bannington, over and over again! He used to set hour after hour jest like that, pullin’ out his baird with pinchers; for he wouldn’t let anybody shave him, and his hand had got too unstiddy to shave himself.”

The colonel breathed short and fast, his face beaded again with cold sweat. Archy uttered a senile, cackling cough.

“Why! I'd have thought 'twas old Mr. Bannington himself, if I didn't know!” murmured the housekeeper.

“Keep still!” cried Doctor Biddikin. “I *must* get this communication! ‘*Dear father!*’ He were a very affectionate son: colonel, he has rapped out ‘*dear father!*’”

“I am with you always,” said the raps.

“O Mr. Murk!” exclaimed the afflicted parent, “that is my son, — that is my son! He were a very dutiful boy. O Mr. Murk, if you could only have known my son Madison!”

“I think I see him now,” said Mr. Murk, staring at the blank air. “Was he a tall, strong young man?”

“That is my son! You describe him better than I could myself. Colonel — Colonel Bannington, Mr. Murk can see the spirit of my boy!”

“He puts his arms around your neck,” said Mr. Murk.

“I think I can feel them! — I feel his arms distinctly!” And the ardent father opened his own to clasp the filial shade.

“He wears a pea-jacket and sailor's trousers,” remarked the matter-of-fact Mr. Murk. “He kisses you on your right cheek.”

“He were always such an affectionate boy! I feel his kiss!” and, weeping, the parent kissed back. “He were wild, you know, colonel, but so affectionate at heart! Can't you speak to me, my son?”

“There he is! — in the door!” faintly screamed Mrs. Burble.

And, starting up, she pointed at the apparition of a tall, sunburnt, swaggering young man, entering, not in ghostly pea-jacket and spiritual trousers, but in clothes of unmistakable mundane fabric, coarse and ragged and soiled, and covering stout limbs of actual flesh and blood.

“Madison!” gasped out the little doctor, uncertain at first whether he saw his son in the flesh or in the spirit.

“Hello, dad!” the dutiful youth responded, entering with a reckless air. “What’s the row?”

“Madison!” ejaculated the parent, “what does this mean? Where have you been?”

“Lying around loose, here and there,” answered the affectionate boy. “I saw the old chaise and Pitman’s white crow-bait as I was going by, and thought I’d get a lift up the hill. Le’ go my collar!” And he put his father from him as a giant would a pygmy.

“I’ll have none of your insolence! Come along with me!” And Biddikin flew round to find his hat.

“Oh, don’t you splutter, you little old burnt-out tallow-candle!” said the youth, his chin on one side, and one eye half-closed with a malign expression. “How are you, Colonel Bannington?”

The colonel was himself again.

“We’ve had the cursedest hocus-pocus!—been getting communications from your ghost for the last half-hour,” said the colonel.

“The devil you have!” said Madison.

“You came from the seventh sphere, and rapped; and Mr. Murk, here, saw you; and your father felt your arms on his neck!”

“Oh, gas!” laughed the youth, with his tongue in his cheek.

“It is easily explained,” observed Mr. Murk, stoical and dry as ever. “A mischievous spirit has been deceiving us. He has gone to Archy: I think he will give his name.”

The words had scarcely parted from his lips, when Archy rushed to the table, and, seizing a pencil, struck it across a sheet of paper with a sort of zig-zag jerk. Ann Maria, taking the paper, held it up, and read, —

“‘*Joe Prince!*’” written in a bold, rapid hand. “Jest like Joe Prince to come and fool us so!”

“Precisely!” said the colonel: “only Joe Prince happens to be alive. Squire Pelt had a letter from him yesterday. Let me tell you, all this is humbug! What isn’t trickery is mesmerism, and what isn’t mesmerism is imagination. Rhody Burble, you’d better attend to your housekeeping in future. Doctor Biddikin, you’ve got your buried treasure to look after; that’s enough for one cracked brain: you’d better let the spirits alone. As for you, Mr. Murk, philanthropist!” — lashing himself into a fury as he proceeded, — “I believe you are a villain, with your bobbing fist and your Swedenborg! — and, if ever I see you coming to my house again after mediums, I’ll make a target of that big nose of yours, — I swear by the Almighty! Madison, carry your

father home, and keep him: he's in his dotage. Aaron, come in, and put a stop to this deviltry!"

Burly, bearded, black, Aaron Burble darkened the doorway, frowning at the evidences of a circle. His wife flew to the kitchen for refuge, followed by Ann Maria. Archy came out of his trance, and shrunk sheepishly away. Biddikin found his hat, and thrust his head into it; while Madison stood with his cocked on one side, insolently laughing.

"It will, perhaps, be expedient for us to withdraw for the present," Mr. Murk observed philosophically. "It has been a rather edifying season; and when our brother, here, has risen above the sphere of passion" —

"Aaron, kill that scoundrel!" hissed the colonel.

"If Aaron wishes for an opportunity to do so, I will remain," drawled Mr. Murk: "otherwise I shall depart." And, as Aaron manifested no disposition to commit manslaughter, the philanthropist considered himself justified in retiring.

Doctor Biddikin was, by this time, half-way down the avenue, calling violently to Madison to "Come along!" Mr. Murk followed; and the three, getting into the rickety old chaise, rode away.

X.

ARCHY LOSES HIS SITUATION.

HE colonel was carried back to his room, his nerves all unstrung; the raising of other spirits having caused a depression of his own, from which it took him three days to recover.

The fourth morning was fine. He resolved to enjoy it; and, Aaron having got him into the garden, Archy was summoned.

Archy, sheepish and afraid, meeting his employer for the first time since the occurrences of the circle, approached with qualms of soul, which were by no means diminished when he felt the inclination to jerk coming on again. There was something about the colonel's legs that "put the deuse into him." He felt an awful impulse to make a lunge at them, which grew stronger and stronger; while his power of resistance grew weaker and weaker. As Sinbad's ship was wrecked by the mountain of loadstone that drew all the iron nails out of it, so Archy was imperilled by those legs; in proximity with which, all the faculties that bound together

his moral timbers, and made him a free agent, were fast loosening.

“What if I *should* jerk!” he exclaimed within himself. “Oh, my gracious! I *shall* jerk!”

“What are you stopping for?” demanded the fierce colonel.

“I—I—nothin’!” gasped Archy with twitching shoulders, and an increasing tendency to pitch into the colonel.

Luckily a diversion appeared, in the shape of Squire Elphaz, who was riding by. Seeing the invalid, he dismounted, and entered the garden. Archy was glad to retreat, and give him place.

But what ailed Elphaz? His step was unusually nervous. His eyes kept up a singularly sharp cross-fire of crafty glances: terribly gristly his face was. But, accosting the colonel, he simmered over, as his manner was, with frothy affability.

“Ha! glad to see you look so well and cheerful, colonel, after your little annoyances.”

“What annoyances?” asked Bannington chillingly.

“Ha! well, your son Guy—eloping with— Bless my soul! haven’t you heard?”

“Guy eloping!” The colonel’s astonishment showed plainly enough that nobody had hitherto ventured to broach the subject in his presence. “What in”—something very profane—“do you mean?”

“I mean what everybody knows, it seems, except you.

Guy has gone off with Ben Arlyn's daughter. Pretty girl, Lucy Arlyn! Can't blame a young fellow like Guy; hey, colonel?"

"Pelt!" said the pale invalid, "you're joking!"

"Haven't you really heard, though?" cried Elphaz. "I thought *you* was joking! You've been as much out of this delightful little world of gossip we live in as I have. I've been off on business, and didn't hear of the elopement till I got back yesterday. But I saw the happy couple in Albany, walking the streets arm in arm; loving as possible! Thought you'd be pleased to know."

"Yes, you thought I'd be pleased to know!" said the colonel grimly. "What else?"

"Some furniture came up by yesterday's express," replied Pelt, — "sofa, chairs, bureau, carpet, and so forth, addressed to Jehiel. I met him this morning. 'Ha!' says I, 'Jehiel, seems we're going to branch out a little: got some new furniture, have we?' You should have seen him stare! for, I vow, 'twas the first he had heard of the new furniture. 'That must be some of Guy's doings!' says he; and off he went to look after it."

"Archy!" cried the colonel, "is Jehiel Hedge at the barn?"

"Yes, sir: he's come for the hoss 'n' wagon."

"Tell him I want him. — Are they married? — do you know, Pelt?"

"Ha, ha! if they are, it's a pretty match! Lucy with-

out a cent in the world; and she never will have any thing, probably; Arlyn won't do much off there in the mines: and Guy—you know best about Guy!" said Elphaz, highly nervous, pulling to pieces a rosebud.

"By the Maker of heaven and earth!" began the colonel violently; but he checked himself. "Guy ain't a fool: he knows what he's about. — Good morning, Jehiel!" — to a stout, honest-faced young farmer, whom Archy brought into the garden. "What are you doing with the wagon?"

"There are some things at the depot I want to take home," replied Jehiel.

"What things?"

"Well, it looks like furniture."

"Where did it come from?"

Jehiel appeared embarrassed, like one afraid of betraying a secret, but finally spoke out, —

"I suppose Guy sent it."

"Suppose!" snarled the colonel: "don't you know? Hain't he told you any thing about it?"

"Not much," said Jehiel, galled, but patient. "When I found the things had come, I thought he must have written: so I went to the post-office, and got a letter I ought to've got yesterday."

"Let me see it!"

Jehiel hesitated, as if in doubt whether to choke the colonel or obey him. On reflection, he gave the letter.

"Jehiel," it said, "you'll find some stuff at the depot,

which I want you to take home and keep till I come. Confidentially, Guy."

"It seems it's a confidential note," remarked the colonel icily, handing it back.

"Seems so," said Jehiel.

"Then what did you show it to me for?"

"Because — you asked for it."

"And because you are a blockhead. Learn to do business better than that. Take the wagon, and get the furniture : it's none of my business."

The colonel turned coldly to Elphaz ; while Jehiel looked as if he certainly would have throttled him if he hadn't been a sick man.

"He's a faithful fellow," said the colonel, after he was gone, "and as devoted to Guy as a puppy. I guess I aggravated him a little."

"You made me laugh!" chuckled the lawyer.

"Yes, *you* enjoyed it!" retorted Bannington, regarding him with utter contempt. "There's one mean trait in human nature, Pelt. I've got it, and you're chock-full of it."

"I? — ha! — what trait?" grimaced Elphaz.

"That which makes an ill-natured man like to vent his spite on any one he can, — as you have come to throw a little of your venom on me!"

The lawyer's metallic voice chinked with a hard, forced laugh.

"You're awful sharp, colonel! But why should I feel venom?"

“How do I know? Maybe you wanted Lucy yourself.”

“Ha, ha!” said Pelt, resolutely merry, though you could see that he writhed inwardly; while impish little glances darted hurriedly from eye to eye, as if afraid of being detected on the nasal transit. “I marry Lucy? That’s a good joke!”

“You’ll be sorry it wasn’t something besides a joke, if Arlyn happens to make a fortune in California,” said Bannington; “unless you can manage to get the fortune *without* the daughter,” he added sarcastically.

A flash of pallor streaked up the gristly face, rendering the persistent grin that was there curious to behold.

“Deused sharp you are, colonel, I vow! Folks say you’ve got to be a medium; and that accounts for it!”

“Folks say — I — a medium?”

Pelt, perceiving that, in the mutual exercise of the “trait in human nature” alluded to, he had got a momentary advantage, made the most of it; then fled, making the restlessness of his horse an excuse for running to him, and so avoiding the colonel’s vengeance.

“Archy!” Archy came. “Forward!”

Archy obeyed; but he felt himself drawn in by the magnetism of the legs once more, and the power to push was leaving him.

“What are you shaking the chair for? If ever I hear of your being a medium again” —

The colonel’s tongue was stopped by a sudden resounding

blow. It took him on his left ear like a missile ; displacing his hat, and ruffling his hair and his temper.

“What was that?” he cried, looking around with fiery rage.

“I don’t know!” articulated Archy, with jerks that betrayed him.

“It was you, you villain!”

“No, ’twan’t! I couldn’t help it! Oh, gosh! they’ve got hold of me agin!”

Quick as lightning came a sharp cuff on the other ear. The colonel was stunned for an instant. Archy did not stay for him to recover, but fled from the wrath to come. When the colonel, struggling up again, turned to hurl his cane at the offender, he saw him already at a distance, making disastrous leaps across the flower-beds.

“What’s the trouble here?” cried a third voice, clear and stern; and Guy appeared, hurriedly entering the garden.

Bannington took no heed of the new-comer, but, leaning over his chair, shook his fist frantically at the widow’s son.

“I couldn’t help it! I swanny, I couldn’t!” protested Archy, staying his flight with a sense of reliance on Guy. “It’s the sperits!”

Guy stood between astonishment and laughter, and demanded an explanation.

“He thinks he’s a medium!” said the colonel, panting with passion. “If I was a well man, I’d horsewhip the notion out of him mighty quick! Did you see him knock my head?”

“Come here, Archy!” said Guy. The genius drew near.
“What ails you?”

“Nothin’, now!”

“Pick up the colonel’s hat, and ask his forgiveness.”

Archy made a movement, but suddenly drew back.

“I dasn’t! Jest as sure’s I come near him, the sperits are at me agin, — jerk, jerk!”

“Then you’d better take *your* hat, and go home,” said Guy. “Do you owe him any thing, colonel?”

“Yes: pay him off! And, if he ever sets foot here again, let the dogs have him!”

The genius, beginning to cry, went back to search for his hat among the pansies, where it had dropped in his flight.

“Stay till I come and settle with you, Archy.” And Guy wheeled the colonel into the house.

But Archy, fearing that the menace of the dogs was to be presently executed, seized his hat, and, without waiting for the adjustment of his accounts, ran away like a deer.

“Now, colonel,” said Guy, “drink this,” — handing a glass of wine, — “and tell me what has been going on.”

The colonel drank, and smacked his thin lips.

“Is that according to Scripture?” he asked, glancing up keenly at his son. “Did the prodigal, when he came back, instead of confessing his sins, call on the old man to give an account of what had happened in his absence?”

Guy kept his countenance well.

“If you’ve nothing better to tell than I have, our conversation won’t be very lively; and I’ll go and pay Archy.”

“Stay!” said the colonel.

Distasteful as the topic was, he wished to forestall, in the mind of his son, all other reports by giving his own version of what had occurred at the “sitting.” He instinctively aimed also to inspire Guy with his own prejudices. Guy listened with profound interest; but the effect on him was not quite what was anticipated. As it often happens that the reluctant admissions of those who denounce a cause do it better service than the bold claims of its friends; so the marvels, which, had they been related by a credulous person, would merely have elicited Guy’s contempt, impressed him powerfully, coming from the lips of so violent a sceptic. He was eager to learn every minute particular, and wearied his father with questions.

“And you can find,” he said, “no satisfactory explanation for these wonders!”

“Do you expect,” retorted his father, “that a man will see through every trick a juggler performs?”

“What!” exclaimed Guy, “are we to set down little Ann Maria, and poor, simple Archy Bramble, as such consummate jugglers?”

“Set ’em down for what you please!” was the colonel’s easy solution of the difficulty. “Jugglery or mesmerism, or even spirits, — or all three together, — I don’t care what it is! I’ve seen enough of it. Don’t mention the subject again. Send Archy off, and find somebody to take his place. If you get a medium, I’ll kill him!”

Afraid of being questioned in his turn, Guy hastened away, his countenance all alive with late experiences, — whether of love and joy, or of love and grief, one could hardly have discovered. Not seeing Archy in the garden, he walked about, plucking a few flowers, gazing at the shimmering waters of the fountain, and listening to its plashy music ; then went to consult Mrs. Burble in the kitchen.

“What do you say, colonel, to young Biddikin?” he asked, returning to the library.

“That rascal?”

“Yes. Rhoda thinks he would do : only she’s afraid you couldn’t manage him very well.”

That touched the Bannington pride.

“I couldn’t manage him? I’d like to see the fellow I couldn’t manage ! provided ” — scowling at the reminiscence of Archy — “ ’tain’t a thundering medium ! ”

“I don’t think Mad has any infirmity of that kind. If you say so, I’ll go and see him this afternoon.”

The colonel assented ; and accordingly, after dinner, Guy loosed his dogs, mounted his horse, and rode away.

XI.

THE SEERESS.



AT the door of a desolate-looking wood-colored house, under the brow of the mountain, Guy drew rein, and asked a small boy in rags, sitting on the grass, if the Biddikins were at home. The boy jumped up, while a tame crow he was playing with flew to the low eaves of the dilapidated porch.

"Y-a-a-s," he drawled with a scared and starved expression.

At that the crow began to hop along the eaves, and chatter, "Mad's come home! Laugh, Jack! — ha, ha, ha!"

Guy dismounted, and was met at the door by Doctor Biddikin.

"Sh!" said the little man with an air of mystery. "We've great doings here, — great doings! Don't speak, but come in!"

"Is Madison" — began Guy.

But the doctor checked him: his skinny fore-finger was on his lips.

“Not a word!”—drawing him into the entry. “I’ve five ladies and gentlemen here to see me,”—he reached to close the door: “you make the sixth.” And in darted the crow after them, as if to make the seventh.

“Good luck for Jack! Laugh, Jack!—ha, ha!” screamed the bird.

“I declare! I didn’t mean to let that creature in! He plagues us dreadfully!” He opened the door again, and put his head out. “Job!”—in a fierce mutter, not designed for the visitor’s ears,—“why didn’t you take care of Jack?”

“Couldn’t; got away from me,” answered the boy outside, in feeble, frightened accents.

The doctor left the door open, and tried to drive Jack out. But Jack was not at all inclined to go. He flew up the staircase, and down again over Biddikin’s head as he went up after him. Then he perched on a half-open door at the farther end of the entry, and, with balancing wings and bobbing head, looked down saucily at the little bald pate that came up stealthily beneath him.

“Biddikin!—can’t come in!—ha, ha!” And he flew to the banisters. As the doctor went there for him, he returned to his perch on the door, chattering all the while impishly.

“Do catch that creature for me!” whispered the doctor, giving up in despair.

“Ha, ha, ha!” said the crow as Guy stepped towards

him. "Mad's come home! — ha, ha!" And, as Guy reached up to catch him, he made a dash at his face with his glossy black wings, darted between his hands, and flew into the room beyond.

"Shut the door!" cried Biddikin eagerly. Jack was in prison. "He shall stay there a while. He has been unusually saucy since Madison came home, — actually blasphemous. How do you account for that?"

"Cats and dogs often catch the spirit of the human beings around them," said Guy; "and the same must be true of other pets."

"There is some subtle sympathy; don't you think there is? That crow is an entirely different creature when Madison is around! — But come!" said the doctor, having by this time tucked up again under his cuffs the soiled shirt-wristbands which had become disarranged in his chase after Jack. And feeling to assure himself that his threadbare coat was buttoned well across his throat, to conceal any appearance of unpresentable linen, he tripped quickly, and closed the front-door; then cautiously opened another that led into a side room. "I sha'n't introduce you," he whispered as they went in.

The gloom of the apartment, the silence, and the sight of a dim, solemn company seated around a table, made Guy feel as if he was interrupting a funeral. He attempted to retreat; but Biddikin pulled him in, and gave him a seat on a bench in a corner.

It was a large, naked, carpetless room, as Guy could see, although the blinds were closed, possibly to shut out the crow, but more probably to exclude the daylight, and at the same time to disguise the broken windows and the penury they ventilated. His eyes soon grew familiar with the obscurity; and he discerned, looming up in the dimness opposite, a sturdy nose, which could belong to no other person than the philosopher he had encountered in the woods. Next him appeared the ghost — not yet disembodied — of the doctor's dutiful and affectionate son. On the other side of the prominent nasal feature sat a young woman with a large forehead that gleamed pale in the dusk. Next her was a tall, well-dressed, highly respectable-looking gentleman, with a bland white forehead. Biddikin took his seat with a corpulent middle-aged man (whom Guy recognized as a neighbor and a deacon) between himself and his son; thus nearly completing the circle. There were still two chairs between the doctor and the tall gentleman, — one vacant, the other occupied by a young lady whose face Guy could not see. She was petit in stature, elegantly dressed, with a small, fine head, auburn hair, and a delicate jewelled hand, that played restlessly with a pencil over a sheet of paper. The company seemed waiting for her to speak; when the silence was broken by a loud outcry on the part of Jack in his prison.

“Jack's mad now, — hear him!” said the junior Biddikin in a laughing whisper.

“Sh!” hissed the senior, frowning.

“I cannot proceed as long as there is any disturbance,” remarked the young lady in low, quiet, decided tones.

“I’ll fix him!” said Madison, starting for the door.

“Don’t you hurt him!—don’t you hurt Jack!” cried the doctor, hurrying after him.

Guy also rose to go out, thinking he might form a part of the disturbance of which the young lady complained.

“The gentleman will please remain,” she said in the same low, decided tone, without looking round.

“Do you mean me?” asked Doctor Biddikin.

“I said *the gentleman*,” was the significant response.

“I—I suppose she means you,” said the doctor, taking hold of Guy with both hands, and pushing him back.

“This seat is for him,”—and the young lady indicated the vacant chair at her side.

“That is very remarkable!” said Biddikin. “When the circle were formed, she said another were to come, and reserved that chair.”

Guy, surprised at all this, and interested to see what would be done, seated himself between the young lady and Doctor Biddikin.

“You remember,” dryly remarked the individual with the nose opposite, “I predicted that you had something to do with this matter,”—fixing his eyes with a mystical squint and a sapient grimace on Guy. “See there!”—his fist began to wag,—“Swedenborg recognizes you!”

“What!” whispered Biddikin, “do you know Mr. Murk, the philanthropist?”

“We have been a-fishing together,” answered Guy.

After a wild clamor in the kitchen, proclaiming that the bird had come to grief, a door was suddenly slammed, shutting out the sound; and Madison, with a black quill stuck recklessly in his hair, returned to his place in the circle.

Guy, almost from the moment of his entrance, had felt stealing over him an indescribable magnetic influence, which impressed him still more powerfully in his new position. It seemed to surround him like a fine, invisible, soothing, almost stupefying mist. Soon a tingling sensation ran electrically down his arm, and he felt a strong inclination to place his hand on the young lady's. It was not until after this that he turned his face, and saw hers, or perhaps the impulse might have been easily accounted for.

She was not more than twenty years of age, — a pale blonde, with very singular features, irregular, and certainly not handsome, but full of refinement and fascination. When Guy first observed her, she wore a decided air of disdain and impatience, as if she did not sit willingly in the company which was manifestly disagreeable to her. Her eyes were downcast, and Guy could not perceive that she once glanced at him. For some time, her hand continued to play with the pencil it held; but at length it was drawn towards her, and folded with its fellow near her bosom: her eyes closed gradually; while the expression of hauteur softened, and finally

gave place to a cold, pallid fixedness of feature, so beautiful, yet so marble-like, that Guy, as he looked at her, shivered from head to foot.

“The first shall be last, and the last shall be first,” she said at length with a sublime elevation of manner blending with a certain childlike simplicity. Then, breathing deeply, her head drooping, while blissful smiles softly irradiated her countenance, she sat silent as before.

“I’m anxious to know what that means,” said Doctor Biddikin after a long pause.

The seeress gave a light start; while, at the instant, Guy felt a thrill shoot down his arm.

“The circle was formed,” she then said, “lacking one. “It is now complete. The first shall be last,” she repeated, clearly, solemnly, deliberately, “and the last shall be first.”

From that moment, Guy saw only her: ignoring Biddikin, forgetting Murk, oblivious of all the ridiculous circumstances attending the occasion, he watched her changing and illuminated features, and listened to her silvery voice.

“I am still more anxious than before,” the doctor took advantage of another pause to observe. “It is evident Mr. Bannington came last into the circle: I were the first” —

The seeress started to her feet, stood erect, her eyelids half closed, and the orbs upturned under them with a wonderful expression; and raising her right hand, as if beckoning down an invisible choir, laid the other upon Guy’s head.

“Behold,” she uttered softly, “your lord and your king!”

Never in his life had Guy experienced any thing like the deep, devotional, melting emotion which these words and the touch of that light hand awakened within him. Something descended upon him like a cloud, as of the breath of angels. Pure, passionless, delicious, dewy thoughts distilled out of it, suffusing his whole being. He bowed his head involuntarily. It seemed like a consecration. Strangely enough, he was not at all surprised by it, but accepted it as something for which his soul had waited long.

“He is the head,” the seeress added after a pause of profound silence; brief, if measured by moments, but deeper than time to the soul within which eternity seemed then to open. She laid both hands upon him as she spoke, then spread them towards the circle. “Ye are the members: follow him.”

She sat down. The little doctor, in great excitement, sprang to his feet.

“He the head? And I—I want to know what is to become of me!”

The seeress, with a mere movement of her hand, waved him down.

“He who enters upon this work for the sake of riches or reward shall be confounded!” were the words of her response, prophetic, impressive, to be remembered long after, in days of tribulation. “Self-seeking has no place here.”

To possess yourselves of the treasure that awaits you in its coffers of rock is not the end, but a step towards the end. A great work for humanity is to be accomplished. For this the treasure has been long provided and preserved; and to this purpose it must be sacredly applied."

Mr. Murk gave a slow, solemn, sleepy, satisfied nod; but Doctor Biddikin rubbed his husky hands with irrepressible nervousness.

"I don't know about that, Mr. Murk! The treasure is mine yet: I've signed no papers. I may have something to say! After all the toil and anxiety it has cost me, — years of suffering, — I can't see others step in and reap the benefits, while I am left to starve: do you think I can, Deacon Pitinan?"

"I see no other way but to follow the directions of the spirits," said the earnest deacon.

"We are all instruments," Mr. Murk added: "I myself am only an instrument," — *great as I am*, his manner seemed to say; while Swedenborg corroborated his remark by the usual manifestation.

Guy was annoyed: but he felt no inclination to laugh; having determined, from the first, to suffer no exhibition of folly or fanaticism to divert his mind from whatever truth might be masked beneath it.

"He who calls himself the owner of the treasure," the seeress resumed, "has claims which shall not be overlooked. But this is the cause of humanity, of social redemption; and

personal interest must not be allowed for an instant to stand in its way. Six individuals, of ample means, must unite to set the stone rolling, which, once put in motion, will of itself possess an impetus sufficient to carry an institution along with it, and to crush in its progress the gigantic evils of the world. Two of the six are here present, — you and you,” — the jewelled hand indicating the tall gentleman and the flushed deacon.

“You’ll be bled, old coveys!” chuckled Madison.

“What is to be expected of us?” asked the deacon in quick pecuniary alarm.

“Each shall subscribe one thousand dollars to assist in the work,” answered the oracle.

“What!” — and all the solid mass of the deacon’s flesh appeared agitated, — “is it going to be so expensive as that?”

“A fund of six thousand dollars,” the secess answered, “can be easily secured. Whatever portion of it is necessary to defray the expenses of the work will be returned with interest to the subscribers, when the large treasure, to which this is but the key, shall be rendered available.”

“An excellent plan! very rational indeed!” cried the little doctor, quickly consoled by the prospect of such golden rain in the empty cistern, where his hopes, surviving stagnation and drought, began to sing like frogs before a shower. “What do you say, gentlemen?”

Mr. Murk nodded, and thwacked his breast, to show that

both he and Swedenborg approved; the tall gentleman looked intelligent and bland, but discreetly said nothing; while the deacon's sweaty visage betrayed that the spirit had to wrestle hard with him for the lucre.

"The six subscribers," continued the seeress, "shall constitute a board of directors. The chosen spiritual head" — designating Guy — "shall be the chief of the association. The energy and executive ability which he will devote to it are necessary to insure early success. But what is chiefly important in this, to him and to the world, is the experience of government which he must gain in small things in order to fit himself for the more glorious sphere of power to which he is destined."

Guy could not repress an incredulous smile. She proceeded to answer the thoughts that prompted it, though he did not speak, and though she, as from the first, did not raise her eyes to his face.

"Let him not despise the manger in which Truth is born. Let his clear eye see deeper than the mean swaddling-clothes in which it is wrapped. And as for himself, let not his scepticism smile at the contrast between what his life has been and what it is henceforth ordained to be. The freedom and wildness of his youth have been needful to give power and inspiration to his prime. He is a child of nature, not a creature of conventionality. The uses of many things, the meaning of many things, which have strangely shaped his life and agitated his soul, he will now understand."

She paused. During the previous practical discussion, the influences which had overshadowed Guy were partially dissipated ; but now they thickened upon him again, and suddenly thoughts of his mother fell like a warm rain upon his heart. The seeress breathed deeply at intervals, and her brow grew radiant.

“ As the treasure which is to be sought lies buried in the heart of the mountain, so in his bosom are hidden divine instincts, of which he is himself but vaguely conscious. The rocks of circumstance have fallen upon them ; the briars and brambles of youth have grown over them. But those heavenly riches have been guarded by angels.” Her voice grew wonderfully soft and winning. “ Angel-whispers have often, in his deep moments, been breathed into his spirit. Blind yearnings after an unknown good, vast and undefined aspirations, have alternated with emotions of despair at what he has deemed his purposeless life. But now clear voices shall be heard comforting and directing him ; the rocks shall be removed, and the precious instincts they conceal shall be brought forth from darkness into light, blessing him, and benefiting the world.”

The inspired manner and tones of voice ; the sweet conviction of reality with which she spoke of spiritual beings watching over him ; and, more than all this, the words that described to himself the inward struggles which he supposed were known only to himself and his God, — every thing must be considered, if we attempt to account for the effect

produced on Guy; and yet all will seem inadequate if we forget the magnetic influences which surrounded him. He yearned then and there to sink upon his knees, and pray as he had not often prayed in his undevout career. But quickly the question arose in his mind, "How do I know but it is all delusion?"

Instantly the seeress responded to his thought.

"Let him neither accept nor deny his mission until what he has this day seen and heard has sunk deep into his heart. In the mean time, he requires some tangible, undoubted proof that there is reality in these things." Indescribably tender and beautiful smiles flashed up the Pythian features as she added, "Proof shall be given."

She took the pencil, and, with eyes still closed, traced rapidly a bold wavy line on a sheet of paper. The pencil flew from her hand, and the paper was pushed towards Guy. He took it, and, holding it in the usual position for reading a line of writing, saw only an irregular scrawl. But, instantly perceiving that it was not writing, — that it was the outline of a human face, — he held it upright, and gazed at it long; gradually drawing the paper closer, to hide the emotions of his features. And this was Guy, the proud, the gay, the reckless, — sportsman, sceptic, scoffer! — overpowered to tears — by what?

XII.

ARCHY'S SUBSTITUTE.



WHEN he recovered himself, the seeress had come out of her trance, and the circle was dissolved. The men crowded around him to see what wonderful "test" he had received. But he folded the paper carefully; it was for no eyes but his own: and, making his way through the group, he approached the seeress.

She had thrown open a blind, and stood tying her bonnet at the end of the room. Something had seemed to vanish magically as the daylight streamed in. The walls and floor, and the faces of the people present, wore no longer any hue of illusion, but looked bare and gray in the unromantic light. Mr. Murk's nose resembled more than ever a great lump of putty. The fat deacon's features appeared in all their native grossness. The large white-gleaming forehead of the silent female showed now an unwholesome bluish tinge, where the hair had been shaved from its summit to make it look bold and intellectual. A sort of mystery still hung about the tall gentleman, who appeared like some splendid personage in dis-

guise ; his mild eyes and cautious lips smiling the intelligence which he did not care to speak.

But Guy watched the countenance of the secess. It was still a fine and striking face, which could well brave the test of daylight. But the spiritual radiance had left the brow ; the sweet, ecstatic expression of the mouth, the almost saintly aspect of the eyes, had vanished. A pale, cold, nervous little woman stood before him, tying her bonnet. Doctor Biddikin introduced him.

“ Did we never meet before ? ” Guy asked, feeling that she must be well acquainted with his history.

She regarded him with provoking indifference. “ I never saw you till this moment, sir, nor heard your name till just now. ”

“ And you knew nothing of me until I entered this room ? ”

“ Absolutely nothing, sir, ” — busy with her gloves.

“ And you never met any member of my family ? ” he continued with a graciousness of manner which no coldness on her part could disturb.

“ Never to my knowledge, sir. Any thing else ? ”

Guy was piqued, not being accustomed to such treatment from young ladies of any susceptibility.

“ I suppose, ” said he, “ I ought to be satisfied with the statements you have kindly condescended to make ; but I have been so much astonished by what I have witnessed, that I should go on and ask a great many more questions, if I did not see that I have annoyed you sufficiently already. ”

“ You have not annoyed me at all, sir.” And, for the first time, the lady’s eyes, clear and bright blue, flashed up frankly, almost laughingly, at Guy. She appeared to him at that moment the most artful, uncivil, capricious, tantalizing woman he ever saw. But he was encouraged, and questioned her with regard to her trance.

“ I don’t know much more about it,” said she, “ than you do. An influence comes over me ; and all I have to do is to give myself up to it. What I say is given me, sentence by sentence, and word by word ; so that I never know, when I begin, what is to follow. The influence is sometimes very pleasant : it was especially so to-day, after you came into the circle. But ” — she shuddered, and her brow contracted into a frown — “ the atmosphere of this house — don’t you feel it ? ”

“ What about the atmosphere of this house ? ” cried Doctor Biddikin, pressing forward, smirking politely, thumbs and little fingers together.

“ The magnetisms of the people who have lived here are insufferable,” she answered with the previous air of impatient disdain.

“ There have been some very singular people in this house, very singular,” said the doctor in some confusion.

“ Did any one ever die a strange, unnatural death in this room ? ” she asked.

“ Did any one — in this room — an unnatural ” — articulated Biddikin, his features changing to a ghastly sallow hue,

but still smirking. "That were a very remarkable question!" he hurriedly added, his matched fingers shaking themselves asunder. "There's been strange deaths in this house, — you know that, Deacon Pitman! — Madison!" turning sharply on the junior, "what do you mean?"

"Ah!" aspirated Madison, his suspicious forefinger pointing at his father with a wicked leer in his eye, "there's been deaths, Deacon Pitman and I know; only we don't!" he added between his teeth.

"What! are you going?" cried Biddikin. "I—I nearly forgot myself. When shall we have another meeting? The sooner we begin operations, the better, I suppose."

"Brother Murk and Sister Lingham are going home with me," said the deacon. "We shall be ready most any time for another setting."

"I am impressed," said Mr. Murk, wagging the Swedenborgian arm, "that the medium will appoint a time" — thwack, thwack! "What does the sister say?"

"I can make no appointment for myself," replied the seeress. "If necessary, we shall be brought together again. Come!" And she took the arm of the mysterious gentleman, turning impatiently to go.

"Madison!" cried the bustling little doctor, "go and untie the horse for them! Quick!"

The carriage was in the rear of the house. The seeress and her companion got into it: she gave not even a parting look to Guy, who stood watching her with interest as they rode away.

“That little woman,” said Madison, re-entering, “has got a devil in her as big as a woodchuck.”

“You’ve got one in you as big as your skin!” snapped his father.

“Yes: none of the little dried-up devils such as your mummy-skin holds, but as live a devil as ever you see!”

“‘Ever you see’! Can’t you use better grammar than that?”

“What should I say?”

“‘Ever you sor,’ of course.”

“Ever you sor, then! — if that makes any difference. I tell ye, I like that little woman. But t’other one, with her shaved forehead, — bah! And the cutwater that Murk craft carries!” — a figure of speech applied to the philanthropist’s nose, which was just then dividing the air between Miss Lingham and the deacon, as the three walked down the road. “I shall run afoul of that some time! I shall get it in my fist, and twist it hard, I know I shall!” And Madison laughed maliciously.

“Did you ever hear such talk from any sane being?” the senior Biddikin appealed to Guy. “He don’t know half the time what he is saying, — not half!”

“Look a here!” returned the junior, “you half-pint of cider, — sour at that! — ye’ll get spilt over if ye don’t take ca-a-re!”

“Hear that?” said the senior. “He abuses me! He shows no respect to his venerable father!”

“Respect! I’ve no more respect for you than for a griddle-cake the cat has left!” spitting contemptuous tobacco-juice, and sprawling on the bench.

“See that! — on my floor!” ejaculated the doctor. “He chews tobacco!” — with immense disgust.

“His dander is up at what I said of deaths in this house,” sneered the son. “But I could tell a thing or two!” menacingly. “That gal made one good hit, if she never did another.”

“I — ah! — don’t you think,” stammered the doctor, “there’s a great deal of imposture — guess-work, to say the least — with these mediums?”

“What she said was law and gospel, though, till she made that last hit,” said Madison.

“Don’t mind a word he says,” whispered the doctor. “I think he’s a little insane: don’t he seem so to you? — Madison, I want to converse with Mr. Bannington alone a few minutes.”

“Think I’m going to be turned out of doors so easy as that, you last year’s puff-ball!” replied the dutiful Madison.

“Insolent!” Biddikin rushed upon him, shaking his fist. “Quit this house im-MEDIATELY!” — these final syllables being capitalized by Madison’s boot, which was suddenly projected against the paternal diaphragm.

“For shame, for shame!” cried Guy, receiving the reeling doctor in his arms.

“ You sor it, didn't you ? ” gasped Biddikin. “ He shall rue that kick, he shall rue that kick ! ” he exclaimed furiously ; then began to groan. “ Oh, my abdomèn, my abdomen ! ” — nursing the afflicted part with both hands piteously. “ He has done me some internal injury ! ” — faintly. “ I am dying ! ” — more faintly. “ I — I ” —

Guy eased him down upon a chair : by which time rage had got the better of pain ; and, springing up, he flew at his dear son with renewed fury. Guy held them asunder, while Madison jeeringly invited his progenitor to come on.

“ Shame, shame ! ” repeated Guy. “ Father and son at blows ! ”

“ Dreadful, isn't it ? ” said the doctor. “ He provokes my life out of me ! What do you advise me to do ? ”

“ I advise you two to live as far apart as possible. ”

“ Just my opinion ! But I can't get rid of him. ”

“ Can't ? You won't let me go ! ” said Madison ; “ or, if I do, you're crazy as a loon till you coax me back again. ”

“ Try it, and see ! ”

“ I will ; and you won't catch me in this house again. ”

“ I don't wish to, if you can't behave yourself, ” said Biddikin, softening a little as his son grew earnest.

“ Why don't you go to work somewhere, Mad, and earn your living ? ” asked Guy. “ You're a man in bone and muscle : it's time you were beginning to show yourself a man in character. I'd do any thing, if I were you, rather than live this miserable cat-and-dog life. ”

“ I will : I'll find a place somewhere.”

“ Will you promise to behave yourself if I will get you one ? ”

“ I can behave myself well enough, only take me away from that dressed-up mouldy doughnut ! that pine-knot on pegs ! that pair of scissors in a rag ! ” — rhetorical flourishes with which the fanciful junior adorned the elder's meagre anatomy. “ Jest gi' me something to do, and see if I won't be something besides the loafer you think I am.”

“ That's precisely what I intend.” And Guy proposed the situation behind the colonel's chair. It was at once accepted.

“ I object ! ” said the doctor, short and sharp.

Guy looked at him in amazement.

“ Yes, emphatically ! Don't you go to getting away my son ! He sha'n't go ! he sha'n't go ! ” — very decidedly, shaking his head, and compressing his lips.

“ What did I tell you ? ” roared out Madison with savage scorn.

“ Pray, doctor, what objection can you have ? ”

“ It's a menial occupation. My son sha'n't disgrace himself by engaging in it. Just think of him, heir to the largest property, probably, in the State, wheeling a sick man's chair ! It's preposterous ! I forbid it ! Madison, don't you sign any papers with regard to that treasure. There'll be half a dozen men at work digging again, within a week, under the direction of the spirits ; but I shall retain the control of it. Re-

member what I charge you, — be careful how you write your name! — Mr. Bannington, can you accommodate me with the loan of thirty-seven cents for a few days? I shall be in a way to repay it very soon.”

“He’ll pay ye when they find the money, — the day after doomsday!” jeered Madison. “I’d sell all my right and title to it for a pack of jack-straws. I’ll see ye,” — significantly to Guy; and he swaggered out of the house.

“What I wanted to say to you,” whispered the doctor, pocketing Guy’s loan, — “don’t you think you and I can take hold now, and find that money just as well as a large company can? There’s a fortune to be made; and the fewer to share it, the better. We can get a medium somewhere: I think Archy would make a good one. I — I don’t like these impudent young women!”

But Guy declined the tempting proposition. He was in haste to depart.

“There’s Madison waiting for you at the gate,” said the doctor. “Don’t you hire him. I’ve my reasons. Don’t try to shake me: I’m firm as a rock.”

“I’ve no wish to shake you, doctor,” — Guy smiled; “but I tell you frankly, if you don’t give your consent, I shall venture to hire him without it,” — going.

“You do it at your peril! I’ve the lor on my side, I warn ye!” Biddikin called after him.

Guy said a few words to Madison as he mounted his horse; and, whistling to his dogs, rode down the mountain-side.

The open air of the peaceful summer afternoon was refreshing to him, coming from that house. Superb scenery spread around him. Far to the north and west stretched the vales and slopes of the sun-spotted mountain region. Close on his left arose the gray and shattered crags among which Doctor Biddikin's treasure was concealed. Still nearer, on his right, opened an immense ravine; through which, far down, visible from the ridge-side where he rode, wound a tortuous highway, and a still more tortuous brook, descending from a woody notch in the eastern hills, and disappearing again in woods a mile farther on.

Those were the woods in which he had hunted Lucy with his hound. That was the brook, which, joined by another from beyond the crags, filled the woods with its noises. And Guy, with tremulous sweet memories, was soon riding where the roads united, and the streams flowed into one, and the sun-flushed foliage overbowed him with solitude and shadow. Amongst rocks and trees, through picturesque leafy vistas, by the wild watercourse, he passed pensively. His dogs ran before and behind him noiselessly. His horse's tread fell muffled in the powdery bed of the road. One or two birds chirped to him at intervals in the green umbrage, with long-drawn plaintive notes. Fresh to his nostrils came the peculiar smell of the woods, breathing of moss-banks, cool and damp recesses, roots and lichens and old leaves. Now and then the pervading sylvan odor was crossed by a faint streak of pine-fragrance astray in the forest; and all the

while, now near, now farther off, poured and plashed and gurgled the torrent.

Poured and plashed and gurgled, too, the waters of Guy's soul. Full of music, sweetly, strongly, onward hasting, impetuous, bubbling, whirling, in light and gloom, rushed the emotions and thoughts of that wilder stream.

Now he takes from his bosom a miniature, which he gazes at and kisses with fond eyes and lips. Then the profile the seeress drew for him he unfolds, and regards long with wondering, yearning, awed, and misty eyes. What new fire is this kindling his nerves, burning him with sweet raptures, sighs, hopes, visions of the future? what vast ambition vaguely taking form in his swelling breast?

Emerging from the woods, he stopped at a plain little brown house in a sequestered nook, a little removed from the wayside. The approach to it was across a large grassy door-yard shaded by butternuts and elms. He alighted at the door, where he was met by the honest-faced young farmer, Jehiel Hedge.

“Well, Jehiel, how do you get on?”

“Just you come in and see! I tell ye, that wife of mine is a treasure. She's got the carpet made; and hark! that's the hammer! — she's putting it down.”

* The two ascended to a pleasant chamber, half sunny, half shaded by the boughs of trees, where a young woman knelt, and drove tacks. She lifted her face, — a plain, rather large, but somehow tender and luminous face, — which blushed quite charmingly at sight of Guy.

"It's all her doings," said Jehiel, pointing out the progress that had been made in new-furnishing the room.

"Only he has done the hardest part of it. He would work his hands off for you, Mr. Bannington," added Mrs. Hedge.

"That reminds me: when I told her we was to get a room ready to-day for a new boarder, she wouldn't hear to it, she couldn't think of it, till I mentioned your name. 'Oh, yes!' says she: 'any thing for him! I'll go right to cleaning!' And here you see evidence of zeal!"

Guy smiled with heartfelt pleasure, observing the gratitude of these kind hearts, and remembering that they owed their happiness to him.

As he went out with Jehiel, he saw a child, just large enough to run about, boldly playing with Ranger.

"Why, Teddy! you'll get eaten up!"

"No, me won't!" said Teddy earnestly.

"His mother can't have him in the room; for he gets the tacks, and swallows them."

"Puts down the nails, while she puts down the carpet, — eh, Teddy? See if you will swallow this." And Guy gave the child a half-dollar.

"By tell ye!" said Teddy proudly. "Papa! see!"

"That name comes natural to him," suggested Guy.

"I'm all the papa he ever had," answered Jehiel with a grave, pitying expression. "I loved him for her sake at first: I love him for Teddy's sake now!" And he folded the child in his arms.

There was something in the scene, and in the history which the scene recalled, which made Guy's breath come quick and somewhat chokingly for a moment: then, silently kissing the rosy-cheeked child, he sprang upon his horse.

He galloped home, saw the colonel, drank a cup of Mrs. Burble's tea, and, exchanging his saddle for a light-wheeled vehicle, departed again at sunset, driving south.

XIII.

LUCY'S NEW HOME.



INE miles southward along the valley, by river and grove and farm, went Guy with humming wheels.

Before him, in the blue distance, rising from the valley at its narrow outlet, old Mount Solomon reared his kingly head. Huge and lone and grand that mountain was : in the sunset light, it seemed "one entire and perfect chrysolite ;" and, as Guy drove by the glassy pond, he beheld all that prismatic mass wondrously doubled, set in the severed ring of the world, and suspended midway in a duplicated evening sky. It typified the happiness he was going to meet ; so beautiful, so warm, suffused with blissful light ; so magnified also, sun-dered from the common world, and set in a ring of ideal life by the mirror of his imagination.

The pond crossed, the valley once more intervened, embedding (so it seemed) the fairer moiety of the enormous brilliant. And now the veins of color that dissolved and trickled down its crags flowed into a gulf of purple shadow,

which rose like the flood around Ararat, drinking the golden rivers, and slowly submerging all beneath its dusky wave. And, as Guy advanced, the mountain appeared to recede before him, farther and farther, into a vast background of shadow, that thickened and lay upon it like a pall.

Would it be thus with his happiness? Was it half illusion? Would the glory fade from it, and the night engulf it? A chill foreboding crept over him, which he could neither account for nor dispel. Enthroned above the understanding sits the wise spirit, that perceives the shadows before us, and hints of them.

In the mean time, out from the silver chambers of space came Antares to keep watch above the mountain. Guy looked up, and beheld that serene ray. "So," he said, "if dark hours are to come, may some heavenly power keep starry watch over us till the morning dawns!"

With quickening thrills he entered the outskirts of a town at the mountain's base. Through dark streets, by many a glimmering cottage light, he passed, till the village hotel was reached. He springs to the piazza, hurries up the hall stairs, and raps in a dim passage at a door. A flutter, a light, quick step, within; eager hands open for him; light and beauty beam upon him; and love welcomes him with soft arms,

"And a voice less loud through its hopes and fears
Than the two hearts beating each to each."

"Guy!"

"Lucy!"

As if the few hours of their separation had been years. And their lips are glued together with a kiss which seals the spring of words, but floods the silence with communion sweeter than speech.

“All mine, — all mine!” And Guy placed her on the sofa, still clinging to him; her curls all alive, and quivering on his shoulder and breast.

“O Guy!” — as soon as she could speak, — “we must never be separated so again!”

“Darling, we never will! Your little home is prepared.”

Mine — not yours?”

“Ours, dearest! I shall see you every day, — every night” —

“See me? That is such a cold word!”

“Till the time comes when you can be mine before the world; which time will come soon.”

“Oh, I hope we are not building our house on the sand! But we won't think of it!” Lucy quickly adds, as if afraid of her own misgivings. “I have you now: that is enough.”

“Is it real? is it not a dream?” says the intoxicated Guy.

“And am I the poor little thing that ran away from you — or tried to — four, five, how many days ago? I can't reckon by days: they have all been melted up in the furnace” —

Into which furnace had gone fear, resolution, pride; trial, struggle, prayer; a journey and a return, with a whirl of emotions and events, all fused into one fiery experience, needless now to recall.

“Do you know what an awful thing it is to have such power?” says Lucy with dewy eyes.

“It is a most glorious thing since it gives me you!” answers the remorseless lover.

“Always think so! You are all I have. You stand between me and the world: you are my world.”

At which he clasps her with impetuous passion, and vows in his soul always to guard her tenderly, and love her well.

“Shall we go soon? or wait till the moon rises?”

“The moon rises late,” said Lucy; “and I am impatient to quit this house.”

“I can imagine you have had a long and lonesome day in it; but it is over now.”

“It seems that I have lived a lifetime in myself since you left me this morning. But that’s not it: there’s a woman here who haunts me. I have heard of the evil eye; but I never knew what it was before.”

“What is it? who is she?”

“I don’t know; only she is a spiritualist,” — Lucy could not disguise her scorn, — “and a medium, I should think.”

“Ah!” — Guy was interested. “How did you find that out?”

“I overheard her talking with the landlord and his wife:

such nonsense ! It reminded me of the fishing fanatic in the woods. Come, let's go : I am growing a little superstitious myself. I can feel that woman's spirit following me around. She'll do me a mischief some time ; I'm sure she will ! ”

“ How does she act ? Describe her. ”

“ I can't. You should have seen how she stared at me at the tea-table ! You would have thought she meant to have my soul : I'm afraid she'll get it if we stay ! ” And Lucy hurried on her things, whilst Guy sent her trunk — a new one, large and well filled — down to the carriage. Then she bade farewell to that ever-memorable room, and, leaning on his arm, passed through the passage to the hall stairs. Suddenly she recoiled.

“ There she is ! ” she whispered, drawing him back. “ Wait here. ”

Guy, who expected to behold a sinister-eyed sorceress, started with surprise. An elegantly attired lady, quite young, with a nervous, pale, peculiar face, was ascending the stairs, followed by a gentleman. Lucy tried not to look at her, but could not resist the fascination. The lady, however, scarcely regarded Lucy, — merely giving her one penetrating, almost disdainful glance ; then bent those expressive eyes of hers full on Guy, with a slight bow of graceful recognition as she swept past. Guy touched his hat to her, and again to the gentleman. Lucy felt suffocated.

“ Do you know that woman ? ” she asked when they were once in the carriage.

“I have met her.”

“When? — where?”

“To-day, — at Doctor Biddikin’s, — when I went to hire Madison.”

“Ah! then that is the place she told about!”

“What did she tell?”

“How she was sent there by spirits, — something about a great organization which she wouldn’t explain; and a mysterious story of a dead body she saw in a sort of vision: did you hear any thing about it?”

Guy felt the time had not come for relating all he had heard: he accordingly answered evasively, and changed the subject. Far different themes absorbed them soon, making the way seem short.

The stars were misty when they set out: a veil of haze covered the sky, and thickened to a cloud; so that it was quite dark before their destination was reached. The carriage struck a gate-post at the entrance to Jehiel’s yard. The restless horse alternately started and backed. Guy grew vexed at trying to manage him; Lucy was alarmed; and, to add to the impressiveness of the scene, it began to rain.

Jehiel brought a lantern to their aid. The wheels were soon disembarassed, and Guy whipped on to the house. No serious accident had occurred. At another time, the little adventure would have served only to raise his spirits. But Guy was vexed that he had suffered himself to get vexed. And Lucy, keenly sensitive, entering her new home with

misgivings she vainly endeavored to stifle, felt that the rain and the collision were ominous ; and experienced a secret shame and misery at seeing only a man and a lantern, when she should have received a far different welcome.

The warm pressure of Mrs. Hedge's hand partly re-assured her. And the aspect of the room that awaited her ; the neat little bed-chamber adjoining ; the pictures ; the books ; the flowers that perfumed the air ; the darkness and the rain shut out, comfort and happiness shut in ; and Guy, her sole companion now in the wide world, her guide, her consolation, smiling fondly beside her, — touched her with surprise and gratitude.

“ This is home ! ” the mellowest of all voices breathed in her ear.

“ It will be home when you are with me ; but when you are away ” —

“ My heart will never be away. I must live one life in my father's eyes : he needs me. I shall do my duty ; but here is home. No Aunt Pinworth here, Lucy ! ”

“ Poor Aunt Pinworth ! What will she say ? ”

“ Who cares what anybody says ? ” cried Guy, exultant.

“ That is easy for you to ask : you are a man. But I, ” said Lucy, — not sadly or reproachfully, — “ how am I going to live through what I know must come ? Here among the very people I have always known, who can't understand me, — to be wondered at, talked about, — oh, what a buzzing there will be ! ” And still Lucy, who foresaw much, did

not foresee all, else she could hardly have looked up at Guy with that charming smile which relieved her words of all shadow of complaint. "But Mrs. Hedge, she will not buzz. Who else, Guy, could we trust? who else could I make my home with now?"

"She will have charity when she comes to understand,— thanks to her rich experience," answered Guy.

"I wish I knew what her experience has been! Tell me every thing you know about her." And Lucy composed herself seriously to listen.

"Well, let me remember. It was just about this season of the year that I was driving home one evening by the road which we just came. But such a time it was! It had been raining for three days: the river had risen, and the flats were covered. The water was in places knee-deep to my horse in the centre of the road. And there I overtook a woman, alone, on foot,— just at dark. She had acres of water still to cross; and, naturally, I offered to carry her over. She got into the wagon with her bundle; and, as I drove along, I inquired where she wished to go. 'Anywhere, to get work,' she said. And I saw at once what manner of woman I had picked up,— an afflicted woman; a woman of heart, crushed by some terrible sorrow, and broken by severe physical suffering. Well, I took her home: and it was time; for she was nearly dead with exposure and exhaustion when I put her into Rhoda's hands."

"Oh, dreadful! But it was good in you, Guy!"

“This is all I know of her history; except that, three weeks later, a child was born in our house, — our little Teddy. Jehiel, who came to work for us, and believed her a widow, fell in love with her, and she with him. He offered himself; and she, true woman, thanking him with tears for the blessing his love was to her, declined it, however, and told him the reason, as a true woman should. Either the refusal, or the reason of it, smote poor Jehiel a stunning blow. I had befriended him in many things; and he consulted me in this. I took him with me to see her, and sat down between them, and put her hand in his, with a few words of serious truth, and left them; and the next spring they were married. I got him this house, gave him land to work; and here they have lived ever since, and been extremely happy. So they are naturally grateful to me; though, of course, I have done nothing for them, to speak of.”

“You showed them the way to happiness, when perhaps they would never have been brave enough to do their simple duty to each other without regard to the past or to prejudice. No wonder they bless you! O Guy! you are good!”

“And, do you know, the kind and sagacious world has repaid me by giving me the credit of little Teddy’s paternity? What will be said now, I wonder? But we must make up our minds never to care.”

“I have made up my mind, you know!” exclaimed Lucy;

“and you shall see if I am not strong! I love this little home already. Dear Aunt Pinworth, sweet Cousin Sophy, adieu, adieu! — What a beautiful carpet!” She fluttered and cooed over it like a dove. “And what a wonderful picture!” — holding the lamp to a large and remarkable photograph of Thorwaldsen’s “Night,” which, with its companion “Morning,” hung by the entrance to the bed-chamber. “Those wings, with that light on them, so majestic and so calm, — they make me shiver! And those darling little babies, — it seems as if I could take them from her arms! It doesn’t look like a picture: it is marble itself; only no marble was ever so soft and pure.”

They sat down by the window.

“What noise is that? The brook? the mountain-brook? Oh, how grand! Is it near?”

“Within a stone’s toss of the house.”

She leaned upon the casement, and looked out into the darkness, and listened to the roar of the stream. The wind had risen, and the rain pattered on the leaves. She was silent with awe; her enthusiastic and ever-changing features fixed for a minute with sublime emotion.

“Such nights will make you melancholy when I am away,” said Guy.

“Not if I can feel that you are coming again, and that you love me when you are away,” answered Lucy.

“Then you shall never be lonely!”

“Oh! I may be lonely; and I love loneliness. How I

shall enjoy the noise of the brook night and day! But it sounds wild and disconsolate to-night, — almost savage in its woe, — wailing out there in the dark! Shut the window: the rain will spoil our new carpet. And your horse — is he taken care of?"

"Thoughtful child, yes! He is in Jehiel's barn."

"Then let it rain! Won't it be fine, if there's a freshet, to sit here and watch it, and hear the stones bump together as the water carries them down? People call it Thunder Brook, then; and this — we will name Thunder-Brook Place."

Lucy was in high spirits, — more radiant with loveliness and exaltation than Guy had ever seen her. The very sight of her was wine to his soul. But he grew pensive at times, thinking how he should tell her what he most desired to tell.

"How does Archy get along?" she inquired. And that led the way.

"Archy has lost his situation."

"Lost it! how?" she exclaimed with the disappointment of a patroness; for, though Archy and the colonel were not aware, it was by her recommendation that Guy had engaged the genius.

"He is a medium," Guy explained.

"A medium! What kind of a medium?"

"A boxing medium, — very well developed, I should say. I caught him boxing the colonel, — cuffing my respected

parent ; knocking off the Bannington hat ;” and he proceeded to describe the ludicrous scene.

Lucy was amazed. If Archy did thus, — kind, honest, timorous Archy, — she declared that he must be insane ; secretly suspecting, perhaps, that disappointed affection was the cause.

Guy then related the previous occurrences which had already made a stir in the village, and was almost vexed at her incredulity and ridicule. She considered Madison’s bodily appearance in the room where his father was getting communications from his spirit as a jocose circumstance, more effective than any argument to prove the absurdity of it all.

“ Perhaps,” said Guy, as if wishing to drop the subject. He produced a sheet of paper, which he unfolded. “ I have a little drawing here : see if you recognize that profile.”

Lucy regarded it with a start of surprise, exclaiming instantly, —

“ Why ! it is your mother ! ”

“ Consider it well,” said Guy, — very grave, his features flushed.

“ The nose and forehead are perfect, and the mouth and the chin ! There can be no mistake. But what a peculiar sketch ! Where did you get it ? ”

Then Guy told his story ; Lucy listening with astonishment and concern. There was a long pause when he had concluded.

“ Do you believe,” faltered Lucy ; “ that she — your mother — was there ? ”

She knew his love and reverence for that mother, and put her question tremulously and hesitatingly. He studied the profile with silent emotion.

“If I could believe that the spirit exists after the body dies; if I could feel assured that she lives, a spirit, in the invisible world,” — he began slowly and seriously.

“But you believe that!” Lucy eagerly interposed.

“Not clearly and fully,” Guy unwillingly admitted.

Lucy was shocked; as every true woman who loves is shocked, when she learns that her lover holds a colder and shallower faith than her own.

“No,” he added: “God help me, I never could say I believed in the immortality of the soul. It is a beautiful theory; but it ‘lacks confirmation.’ I wait for proof.”

“Do not reason and intuition prove it, to say nothing of the inspired Book?”

“Plato fails, with all his power of reason; and, when I read the ‘Phædo,’ I wish I were Cebes or Simmias, that I might put to Socrates some pertinent questions. And intuition? We feel that the soul is immortal, — I certainly do; but may not that be because we desire it should be so?”

“But the Scriptures?” said Lucy, pained and agitated. “The promise there, — the resurrection, — the angels that rolled away the stone!”

Guy smiled. “You wouldn’t believe some things I told you just now; though we have my father, Mr. Burble, and

others whom we know, as witnesses to the facts. How, then, can you expect me to believe what occurred hundreds of years ago on the evidence of persons I never knew?"

Lucy looked frightened. "What proof can there be, then?"

"None!" answered Guy; "unless some imprudent, sociable angel let fall — as Emerson declares none ever did — a syllable, or many syllables, to answer the longings of saints, the fears of mortals."

"O Guy!" pleaded Lucy, "don't talk of Emerson, or of Plato, or of proof, but believe! Believe as I do; because I know in my heart that God is, that Christ is, that my mother who died lives still!"

"If I believed the same of my mother, then I should know what I think of *that!*" — laying his hand earnestly on the profile.

"That she was there?" Lucy inquired fearfully.

"What else so probable as that she was there? And, to tell you the truth, I felt her there before the profile was drawn. How that was done, even supposing she was present, I don't pretend to say: but I can conceive that it might be; while I can't conceive how by any chance or possibility it could have been done, had there been no intelligence present superior to the minds of us who were present bodily."

"What! not if the medium had seen your mother?"

"If she had seen her a thousand times, it would be difficult to credit that she could draw instantly from memory so

accurate a likeness. She would be a genius. And what object could she have in denying that she is a genius?"

"I am sure of only one thing," said Lucy, all her feminine antipathy raised again, — "that she is an artful, designing woman!"

"I hope you intend that simply as a pun," Guy responded somewhat bitterly.

"No pun at all, but downright earnest!"

He deliberately folded the paper, and replaced it in his pocket with a hurt expression. She lost no time, but flung her arms round his neck.

"I don't care what she draws, if she don't draw you!" she cried with the charming playfulness with which she knew how to embroider the most sombre scenes.

He did not smile. "I think we may use reason in speaking of things we do not understand, and charity in speaking of persons we don't know," he said with a seriousness of mien that went to her heart.

Thus the evening, which, of all evenings, should have been warm and vibrant with harmonious love, was marred by discord.

But the moody Guy could not long resist her sweet and winning influence. The first silver tears that slid from those beloved eyes transported him with tenderness; and soon all differences were forgotten in the deliciousness of reconciliation.

It was raining still when he departed ; and Lucy, watching him from a window till he disappeared in the darkness which no lantern could illumine, listening to the slow grating of the wheels along the gravel till all sounds were lost in the universal pouring and pattering, felt a sense of loneliness and dread come over her, solemn as death.

But she was weary. Guy had left her that she might sleep ; and nestling down in her cool white bed, with folded palms and silent prayer, she, for the first time in many days, felt herself at rest ; and soon sank to sleep, breathing the faint perfume of flowers that re-appeared in dreams, and hearing all night long, — like the Fairy Knight of Spenser, —

“To lull her to her slumber soft,
A trickling stream from high rock tumbling down,
And ever drizzling rain upon the loft,
Mixt with a murmuring wind.”

XIV.

THE SITUATION.



HE hive of village gossip began about this time to buzz with unusual excitement. There was a great deal of noise, and much stinging; while a little honey was dispensed, — to those persons, of course, who least deserved it.

One of these was young Biddikin. He had gone to work at Colonel Bannington's; had put off recklessness with his rags, and adopted good moral habits with those which Guy gave him out of his wardrobe; while just enough of the old aroma of wickedness remained to give a pleasant pungency to his character. Society delights in change, in contrast and surprise. It gets tired of hearing Aristides called the Just; and is always eager to pick up and patronize the scamp with a thousand crimes, and one virtue to make them interesting.

Another who got honey was Lawyer Pelt. As soon as it was ascertained that he had purchased village lots on which he purposed erecting a mansion of superior elegance, the mothers of unwedded daughters began to pronounce his

euphonious name with respectful interest ; and the daughters themselves looked at him as the Thessalian maidens might have looked at King Admetus's shepherd, when, from his mean disguise, they saw Apollo emerging. The fathers nodded and smiled, and said Apollo — we mean Pelt — was a good deal more of a chap than had been supposed : and everybody wondered at his hitherto' unsuspected prosperity ; while only one head was dubiously shaken, and that was a red one.

Another who got honey was Lucy ; but it was the honey of cyphonism, — a little thin sweetening of praise spread over her to attract swarming insects with their bites and stings.

Fearful to a young girl, however innocent, however brave, she may be, is the first vile darkening and devastating swarm that alights upon her character. And think you Lucy, though buried in her solitude, did not hear and feel ?

Not blindly, not without knowing well what to expect, had she done a thing to be greatly wondered at : she had treasured patience and faith against this inevitable hour ; but, when one after another officious friendly-seeming foe hastened to report to her confidentially the world's sarcasms and harsh judgments, it seemed more than heart could bear.

Still Guy believed her happy ; nor was he altogether deceived. Delicious was the consolation of his coming. It was warm and perfumed spring after the winter of discontent. The rosy glowing hours drifted by like dreams. They lived

imparadised in one another's arms, like the first mortal pair that loved and sinned. Nepenthe brimmed their cup, —

“ A drink of sovereign grace,
Devisèd by the gods for to assuage
Heart's grief ; . . . whereby all cares forepast
Are washed away quite from the memory.”

And yet scarce the true nepenthe was it ; whereof “ such as drink, eternal happiness do find.” It blessed their lips and hearts, but did not infuse its divine quality forever into their souls.

What, then, was amiss with them ?

Alas ! what men are always trying to do, yet none ever succeeded in doing, they had also attempted.

O lovers ! wherefore is this crimson morning of passion granted you, but that you may awake from the delirium of the sleep-walking world, and look upon realities ?

The ladder of worldliness was never the way to heaven. But despise the earthly rounds, and, lo ! what wings are given you ! The pure ether upbears you on its crystal bosom ; the world with its nothingness recedes ; the blissful doors fly open.

Guy and Lucy aspired to heaven, but clung to the ladder.

Had they been as ready to brave the colonel's wrath and all its consequences as they were to risk the world's opinion ; had they, for love's sake, given themselves openly and truly to each other, fearing nothing, concealing nothing, accepting cheerfully all penalties, — what blessedness might have been

theirs ! But Guy feared for Lucy ; Lucy trembled for Guy : and so, not altogether selfish, but each for the other's sake, they sinned.

To say that they were waiting for the colonel to die, and were fast accumulating causes to hope he would die soon, gives a rather ugly face to the matter, which the blushing Muse would gladly veil in tropes.

Indirectness, deception, — these are the fatal byways in which many a secret serpent crawls ; and therein walked the lovers towards the tragedy of their lives.

Breathe warm upon them, perfumed spring of love ! Drift, rosy and glowing hours, — drift over them like dreams ! Flow, sweet nepenthe, yet a little while !

In the mean time had arisen a topic which was speedily absorbing all others.

The table of spiritualism — like the old broom with which the magician's apprentice, in Goethe's poem, tries his hand at his master's trade — had let loose a flood which swelled beyond all bounds. Over the threshold of conventionality, over the stairs of class, over the walls of creed, rushed the uncontrollable waters, threatening to overwhelm the entire structure, and frightening those who did not believe that the Master was at hand, and that the house would be improved by the washing.

A great perturbation ensued in the little village. Four classes at once arose, — believers, who received the revelations

of spirits as a new gospel of glad tidings ; opponents, who as promptly denounced them as imposture, and the work of the Devil ; and earnest investigators, who meant to be impartial, avoid the fanaticism of both sides, and come to just conclusions. The fourth class were those who didn't care whether the thing was true or not : they had other matters to attend to, — buying, selling, eating, drinking, begetting, — and desired to postpone acquaintance with the higher spheres as long as possible.

In a short time, it was estimated that every other member of every other household was a convert to the new doctrines. Again children were divided against parents, and parents against each other, as only the sword of belief can divide them. To superstition was opposed persecution : and it was fortunate for some that the world has grown wiser than when it hanged witches and burnt heretics ; that no inquisition exists but Mrs. Grundy's, and no stake but public opinion, which are yet sufficiently cruel.

Such simple-hearted people as the Brandles accepted the new faith with scarce a question. To the believing widow there was nothing in life so real and sweet as the visits of her once lamented husband, now sensibly present with her again, communing with her through the mouth of their son, bringing daily joy and nightly consolation.

Lucy represented a rarer class of minds, whose conception of spiritual existence is so exalted, that they revolt from the least admixture of the earthy or the absurd in what claims

for its origin the pure realms in which their sainted ones dwell.

Guy was not one of these. No dove-like opinions had built their nests in his mind, to fill him with fluttering and alarm at the least disturbance. In that open belfry were large spaces, inviting all the birds of heaven.

Long his soul had been famishing; and in his unrest he had resorted to dissipation and wild sport, seeking he knew not what. But love had changed him, and prepared him for a still greater change.

Those who have been rocked in the cradle of some creed can with difficulty conceive of the whirlwind-like stress with which the first realizations of God and immortality seize a nature like his, deep with depths which have never yet been sounded, restless with powers which wait for development and direction, and endowed with impetuous energy potent for good or ill.

With a stern logic capable of receiving truth in spite of its ridiculous or coarse disguises, he became an investigator of the most grasping and indefatigable sort. He regarded with amazement and contempt those who were indifferent to a subject of such momentous importance; and was often impatient with Lucy, whose first impressions and unreasoning prejudices would not yield to any arguments. His investigations kept him much from her; and thus between them also the point of the dividing sword showed itself, to the terror of one at least, who saw the inexorable edge advancing.

Doctor Biddikin's treasure had risen in repute. Good

spiritualists, receiving as infallible truths the utterances of mediums, began to credit the existence of what had hitherto been regarded as a chimera of the Biddikin brain. In connection therewith had been predicted in divers places, by many seers and seeresses, a new social organization, involving reforms of Church and State, and influencing the destinies of the world; in several of which prophecies, even by persons to whom Guy was unknown, he was distinctly named or unmistakably described as the leader of the new order of things. To Luey it was all fanaticism: and, seeing the effect which accumulating marvels and predictions were having upon her lover, she exacted from him a promise that he would avoid the mediums of the money-digging spirits, as she termed them; and especially the seeress whose image she remembered, and whose fascinations she dreaded, with an almost superstitious fear.

When, out of the tenderness of his love for her, Guy gave that promise, little did he guess how it was destined to be broken.

XV.

THE BEAR-HUNT.



IT was a morning in the month of September. Some young girls went up to a hill south of the village for blackberries. They were picking busily, and chatting merrily, when it was discovered that they were not alone in that desert of rocks and bushes. They heard a rustling, and saw a black coat through the briers, — a very mysterious-looking black coat, the wearer of which appeared to be advancing towards them on hands and knees. They retreated a short distance, and held a whispered consultation; when the stranger, approaching behind a low clump of foliage, stopped, and, slowly raising himself on his feet, looked over. It was a figure, a countenance, to stamp itself in the memory. With simultaneous screams they ran wildly away, tearing through briers, stumbling over stones, dashing like a waterfall down the rocks, and not venturing once to look back till they were off the hill.

The said black coat was not a coat merely, but a complete suit, — trousers and waistcoat all in one, — which doubtless

the wearer would have been very sorry to lose, on account of the extreme difficulty of getting another. Nevertheless, within half an hour from the time when he winked over the bushes at the girls, a dozen men had resolved to have that sable garment off his back before sundown.

Foremost of all went Guy, clad in a gray hunting-jacket, buttoned well about his compact form; a gray hunting-cap, from beneath which flowed his wavy brown hair; in his hand a short rifle; in his belt a pistol and a knife; at his side his dogs. He stopped for Jehiel on his way; and, while Jehiel was loading his musket and pulling on his boots, what more natural than that Guy should spring up stairs, and spend a precious moment with Luey?

She knew his step, — for nobody else ever mounted those stairs at three bounds, — and was almost in his arms before she noticed his piratical appearance.

“What!” she cried, admiring him in that strange costume, “have you turned bandit?”

“Yes: I’m going to waylay a traveller over here, and rifle his trunk.”

“A bear?” And Luey was astonished to learn that she had rightly guessed; for, though individuals of the ursine species were known still to exist in the mountain wildernesses, their appearance within the range of civilization was of rare occurrence.

“He has had the presumption to go blackberrying with the girls; for which he must die.”

“But, Guy! — you will get hurt!”

She was pale with fear; but he laughed gayly at the danger.

“Only cowards get hurt. Never fear for me! Good-by!” He clasped and kissed her, and was off before she could speak.

From her window she saw him dash with his dogs across the brook, climb the bank, swing his cap at her from the summit in the attitude of a Mercury “new-lighted on a heaven-kissing hill,” and then disappear.

She sat down with fainting soul, and thought, “What if he should die? God keep him! — God keep him!” she prayed with the wild fervor of love and fear, demanding only that he might live; forgetting that there are evils worse than death.

Joined at the foot of the hill by Jehiel, Madison, and Aaron Burble, — who had brought Ann Maria with him as a guide to the spot where she and her mates had seen the bear, — Guy swiftly stated the plan he had decided upon for the hunt. Madison, who had no gun, was to stay behind, and keep back the dogs until they were needed. Jehiel, and others who arrived, hastened around the eastern side of the hill, to station themselves by a field which the bear must cross if he attempted a direct escape to the mountains. Then Guy and Aaron, receiving their directions from Ann Maria, who was left behind for safety, advanced cautiously into the undergrowth, hoping to get within sight and gun-shot of Bruin before he took the alarm.

With great difficulty, Madison restrained the dogs and his own impatience after the others departed. He entered the bushes, brandishing a pitchfork, which he felt confident no discreet bear would fancy the looks of in his valiant hands.

Suddenly the report of a gun on the hill filled the listeners with anxious expectation. Who fired? Was the bear shot?

Aaron rushed up to Guy in the thickets.

“ Did you fire ? ”

“ No. Somebody has got the start of us. Hark ! — that crashing ! ”

Some object was hurrying through the thickets. Both sprang forward to intercept it; but it passed unseen, swiftly descending the hill on the side they had come up. They remembered with dismay Ann Maria, left below there, and doubtless joined by this time by others too timid to engage in the hunt. Guy shouted to Madison to look out for what was coming.

Rallying around him the alert and excited dogs, Madison stood with levelled pitchfork to receive the enemy. But presently hearing a formidable crackling and thrashing in the thickets, as of a monster plunging directly towards him, his courage failed, and he sprang backwards. To increase his consternation, a wild vine caught his heel, and threw him. Through the bushes, straight down upon him, before he could rise, came the cause of the commotion.

“ Seek ! bite 'em ! ” he said to the dogs, and, sticking up

his pitchfork to defend himself, came within an inch or two of perforating the waistbands of Archy Brandle, who emerged, leaping in terror down the declivity.

Luckily the dogs knew Archy, and looked beyond him for their game. Madison's courage rose at once, and he rose with it.

“What ye running so like a scar't devil for?”

Hatless, hair erect, staring, Archy gasped out as soon as he could articulate, —

“I shot a bear!”

“You have? Where's yer gun?”

“I — I d'n' know: lost it.” There was another clashing of the bushes. “He's coming! He's arter me!” shrieked Archy.

“Don't ye run!” cried Mad. “I'll fork him! the dogs'll take him!” And, valiant as if he had slain one monster already, and was good for several more, he stood holding his fork while Guy and Aaron came hurriedly out of the thickets; the latter, with his face and figure and black beard, resembling so much an *ursus Americanus*, that Mad afterwards swore that he should have stuck him if he had come first.

“Where was the bear?” was the eager inquiry of the hunters.

“'Twas Archy! and I come perty nigh fixing him,” said Mad, with a wicked expression about the eyes. “He has shot your bear for ye.”

This was the way of it : —

Archy had been up on the hill for berries, taking the old shot-gun along in hopes he might see a partridge. Having filled his basket, he was walking over a barren ridge, his basket in one hand, and his gun in the other, when he came to a steep place which it was necessary to descend. Hearing a noise, he set down his basket, and, advancing with careful steps and levelled piece, met Bruin exactly face to face. He looked at Bruin ; Bruin looked at him. He seemed benumbed by the sight ; and it was a moment before the reality of the thing, with all its terrors, came over him. Then, raising his gun, he took aim (he thinks), and fired. An awful growl followed the report, to be dreamed of with starts of horror many a night afterwards. But Archy had no thought of waiting to witness the effect of his shot. Flinging down his gun, he took to his legs. Thus much, though rather less coherently, he related to the hunters ; volunteering to return with them to the spot, where he hoped to find his hat and his berries, with perhaps a slaughtered wild beast.

He knew the hill so well, that with little difficulty he took them to the ridge. Here was his hat in one place ; there was his basket of berries. There lay his gun on the ground. But no Bruin.

“ I don't believe you fired within a mile of that bear ! ” said Mad. “ I'll try it next time ! ” possessing himself of the gun. “ You may keep the fork.”

But Archy, who was anxious to follow up the game, which

he was sure he must have wounded, would not consent to the exchange. A scuffle ensued; Mad looking as if he would about as willingly do Archy a mischief as the bear. Guy made him give Archy the gun; and, to satisfy him, let him have his pistol.

The dogs had by this time scented the game; and no time was to be lost in following them.

Bruin had evidently been not much less frightened than Archy; the progress he made showing that he had fled in one direction as fast as the youth in the other. Crack! bang! went a rifle and a musket, almost simultaneously, beyond the hill.

Jehiel and a companion, stationed in the field, had fired at him as he passed. The dogs appeared soon. The hunters followed from the hill. The game plunged into a swamp, which echoed presently with the cry of hounds, the crack of guns, and the shouts of men.

It was a small swamp of balsams, hackmatacks, cedars, and fallen trunks; gray, mossy, tangled, pathless. Here the bear paused, perhaps considering himself safe in that gloomy fastness. But through the low spiked branches blazed a couple of guns, and over logs and hollows dashed the dogs. Yelps of pain, and growls of rage, succeeded the onset; and straightway out of the swamp, through an undergrowth beyond, swept a huge, polypous, many-headed, terrific monster, — one indistinguishable mass of dogs and bear. It left an open path behind it. The hunters sped after, and came upon

an animal kicking on his back, as if in the last spasm. It was Ranger, out of whose body the breath had been beaten by the stroke of a paw. Guy spoke to him : he got up, limping, and carrying his tail dejectedly ; but soon recovered his spirit, and joined again in the chase.

They approached the mountain's side, near which the clamor of the dogs proclaimed that the bear was at bay.

Guy hurried forward. The thickets opened upon a scene of awful grandeur. Stern and tremendous rose the cliffs before him. Vast cataracts of stones, high-piled enormous blocks, like stairs for Titans to mount, covered the mountain's front, and deluged its base. High over all soared the gray, eternal crags, like shattered columns towering above the ruins of overthrown pyramids.

In the cavernous recesses of these rocks the bear had sought refuge ; and the hunters, rushing up, found the dogs barking at the mouth of an extemporized den.

It was a dismal cavity, running between and beneath the irregularly tumbled masses. An ice-cold stream flowed out of it. From dark chambers, where the winter's accumulated frosts never failed, an atmosphere of arctic death breathed chill in the face of the warm and living day. At the entrance the dogs voiced their fury and fear, not daring to penetrate the horrid hole.

Madison, with pitchfork and pistol, was on the spot almost as soon as Guy. But Aaron ploughed his way more slowly, with Archy in his wake. Jehiel and two or three others came

by a more circuitous route, frequented by visitors who flocked thither to find ice in midsummer, climb the Titanic stairs, and scratch their names among the leathery lichens that incrust their ancient surfaces.

Guy drove back the dogs, and asked the hunters what was to be done.

“I believe I can see the cus,” was Mad’s profane remark, peering into the den, with his hands and feet in the water.

“Go in and ketch him by the legs, and I’ll take *you* by the legs and haul you both out,” said Aaron. “Or, if anybody’ll lift the eend of that rock, I’ll jump in and ketch your bear myself;” and he mopped his forehead with his big brown hand.

“That rock is just about the size of my kitchen,” remarked Jehiel.

“Which you expect you’ll be cooking some of that bear-steak in to-morrow morning; but you won’t,” said Aaron. “I move that we give up the brute, and go and find Biddikin’s money at the top of the rocks. They say you can see it, provided you’re a medium; and it only needs a little digging to get it.”

“I imagine,” said Guy, “it will be easier and more profitable to get the bear than the money. He is in a corner at the end of this rock,—just where a bullet won’t reach him.”

“Give me five dollars,” said Mad with an oath, “and I’ll go in and shoot him!”

“He would hug you to death before you could pull a trigger.”

“Five dollars would more than pay the damage, though,” was Aaron’s suggestion; which elicited from Mad one of his very disagreeable, murderous looks.

“You better dry up,” said he, “or there’ll be damages five dollars won’t pay.”

“Keep your temper, boy!” said Guy, “and give me the pitchfork.”

“You better take the pistol; he’ll be shooting somebody with it,” said Aaron, delighting to exasperate the Biddikin youth, the two having been together enough to hate each other cordially.

Guy explored the den, and verified his conjecture regarding Bruin’s position by eliciting a fierce growl, and having the fork nearly knocked from his grasp as he thrust it towards the hidden corner.

“What did you come out for?” laughed Aaron. “I wouldn’t come out without the bear.”

“No: you would come out *with* the bear a good deal faster than you went in!”

The dogs in the mean time were climbing about the rocks to find another entrance to Bruin’s retreat. Guy followed them.

“What a place this would be for a fellow to hide when officers was after him!” said Mad, with a gloating grin at the piled acres of rocks.

“Look out you don’t ever have to try it,” said Aaron.

“There’s holes up there he could slip down in, where no

beef-fed constable could get at him," young Biddikin added, with a fire in his eyes that betokened a vivid imagination of some such scene.

Now, Aaron, with his burly proportions, happened also to be a constable.

"You may wish that beef-fed constables was skurceer than they be, some day!" he retorted.

"I'd be a tougher customer than the bear to deal with!" Mad answered.

And so they continued to jest, rather earnestly; little guessing what realities, in the not far future, their blind words were blundering upon.

"Pass me my rifle," said Guy, standing waist-deep between rocks, beneath which he had found a crevice that would admit a gun-barrel. He took his piece, and carefully thrust it down out of sight. "That muzzle isn't far from Bruin's corner; and, if nobody has any better plan, I propose to fire."

"Archy says he can set a trap that'll catch him when he comes out, if we'll wait," said Jehiel.

But Guy preferred to try what virtue there was in powder, and directed the men to range themselves, with levelled guns, in readiness for the bear, in case he should be started.

"All ready!" said the men in a row.

Then Guy reached down to the rifle-lock, and touched it.

A subterranean report was heard, followed by a snarl of rage and a plashing in the water; when instantly out from

his icy den rushed Bruin, right through the rank of hunters, and into the brush, before a gun was fired.

The dogs were at him immediately, close and savage, but doing him little harm, while they shielded him from shot.

“Well done, boys!” said Guy sarcastically. “Why didn’t you hold on to him, Aaron?”

“His hair was short,” said Aaron (who had fallen), awkwardly regaining his feet and his gun.

The chase recommenced. Across the thicket’s edge, and aslant up the mountain-side, through stunted growths of birch and fir, over waste spaces blackened by devastating fires, stretching southward to higher and higher altitudes, scaling ledges, breaking through briers and brushwood, went the powerful and ferocious beast. He tossed the dogs from him, and made them howl. Blackfoot went rolling with sharp yelps down a bare shelf of rock, alighting in a tree-top. The hunters climbed as best they could in the toilsome chase; making a foothold of every root and stone, and often hauling themselves up by the boughs of trees in steep places. As they advanced, the mountain rounded, and travel became less perilous and rough, until, a thousand feet above the valley, a magnificent summit was attained.

Due east across the bald mountain-top Bruin journeyed; then doubled towards the north, down a gradual descent, entering a vast green wilderness, in the midst of which glimmered a broken sheet of water. It was a mile-long lake, stretching north and south along the hollow of the range; lifted like a cup to the blue sky.

“If he swims that pond,” said Jehiel, “we shall lose him. He is making straight for it!”

“And so are we,” answered Guy. “The dogs worry him now: they have learned his style of fight. He is losing blood fast! We are gaining on him! We shall shoot him in the water!”

But, before the water was reached, Bruin, weary, wounded, bewildered, having distanced the dogs for a moment, succumbed to temptation. A friendly-seeming tree was at hand. Was it a bright idea, or the last resort of a desperate, disheartened bear, to hug that sturdy trunk in his arms, and work his way up quickly beyond the reach of canine fangs?

It is done! Bruin is lodged in a maple crotch, twenty feet from the ground, with a horrible, howling dog-dance beneath him, when the hunters arrive.

“Don’t shoot with that pop-gun, you idiot!” said Guy, as Mad was about to fire his pistol at the black, shaggy mass laid up along the limb. “Wait till the rest are ready, and let all fire at once. He must be dead when he comes down, or there’ll be danger.”

Only Guy, Jehiel, and Aaron had kept up with them. But now another appeared.

“Well done, Archy! What have you got in your gun?”

“Jehiel gi’ me a musket-ball,” panted Archy.

“That’s well. We won’t wait for the rest. Choose your positions.” All were soon ready. Four gun-barrels and a pistol were aimed upwards. Guy gave the word: “One — two — fire!”

The volley echoed through the woods. But only from the pistol and two guns curled any smoke. Guy's and Jehiel's pieces had missed fire. Bruin did not stir.

"Never touched him, by thunder!" exclaimed Mad.

"My musket never was worth a cent to shoot up with; the flint won't throw fire into the pan," said the vexed Jehiel.

Guy, having snapped again, impatiently tore the explosive cap from his gun to replace it with a fresh one, still keeping his eye on the bear.

"Stand from under!" he shouted to Mad. "He is beginning to slide! Here he comes!"

Slowly slipped the shaggy mass from the limb, half revolving in the air as it came down, and smiting the ground with a resounding jar. The dogs darted aside, and leaped upon him instantly. But, though momentarily stunned, neither his wounds nor his tremendous fall had finished him. Turning on his haunches, breathing snarls of rage, his mouth covered with foam and gore, he flung right and left with paws and jaws whenever he was attacked.

Guy levelled at his heart, and fired. Straight at him, on the instant, rushed the infuriate beast. In vain the dogs beset him. In vain Jehiel's musket, good for a level shot, being newly primed, sent an ounce-ball into his neck. Guy leaped behind a tree-trunk, and drew his knife.

"The fork!" said Jehiel; and, snatching it from Mad's hands, he flew to the rescue, driving the tines deep into the monster's flank.

That saved Guy. The bear turned. Bruce, encouraged by the hunters, sprang at his throat. The next moment, the rash dog was yelling in a deadly embrace. It would have been all over with him soon ; but Guy leaped upon the enemy with his knife, which he buried to the hilt in his side.

The desperate animal, releasing Bruce, made a blind and ineffectual dash at Guy, who sprang away, bearing his dripping knife ; then giving his tormentors a last look, pitiful to witness but for the passionate eagerness with which they sought the life dear even to a bear, he burst away from them with all his remaining strength, and took to flight.

The dogs were now mostly disabled, and he scarcely heeded their onsets. Obdurate, ferocious, drunken with rage and wounds, he tore through the woods towards the lake, streaking the ground with his blood. Jehiel followed him close with the fork.

“ Let him alone ! ” shouted Guy, reloading his rifle as he ran. “ He is a butchered bear : he’ll die in the water. Let him go ! ” for he knew well the danger, should the beast in his last agony turn on his friend.

Jehiel desisted ; and Bruin, reeling, snorting blood, wallowed off into the water with the dogs.

At that moment a volley of feminine screams went up from the shore, not far off. Guy looked in their direction, and saw through the trees, on a point of the beach, a group of women. They could hardly have reached that wild spot by land ; and the idea of a boat immediately suggested itself.

He ran towards them out of the woods, and saw the thing he wanted, drawn upon the sand. He called to them not to be frightened, and sprang into it as he pushed it off. Jehiel came after, plashing through the water, and threw himself into the stern as it veered round.

A few swift strokes brought them to the scene of the bear's final struggles. He was fighting the dogs in the water, which all around him was bubbling, and stained with blood. Jehiel took the oars; while Guy, stationed in the bow, prepared to finish the fight. He first drew Blackfoot, half drowned, out of the water. Then, to make a speedy end, he placed his rifle-muzzle at the bear's head, and fired the last shot. The slaughtered brute swam round and round, with feeble plunges, in a streaked and foaming eddy, his loose floating hair making him appear as large as two bears.

"It is over!" said Guy. He pierced the shaggy hide with the fork, holding the head submerged, and pushing the unwieldy carcass before them as Jehiel rowed shorewards. Then, leaving his companions to drag it out upon the beach, he rowed back to the point from which he had taken the boat.

The ladies had by this time been joined by some gentlemen from the woods; and Guy was astonished to find himself among people he recognized.

A small number of spiritualists were having a picnic on the lake-shore; and it seemed something more than chance

which had led him so unexpectedly and so strangely into the very company which Lucy had made him solemnly promise to avoid.

“Fatality!” he thought, as his eyes encountered those of the seeress.

XVI.

GUY RETURNS WITH THE BOAT.



HE determined not to land. "After stealing your boat, I've come to borrow it. We have a rather large quadruped here, which we want to ship to the end of the pond."

The loan was granted, and the picnic-party went to look at the bear. Only the seceress remained, sitting on the shore, watching the water, apparently indifferent to bear-hunters and bears.

"Beautiful! wonderful!" said a man with a forked switch in his hand, poking it into Bruin's hair; "but how much more beautiful and wonderful alive! How could the brothers find it in their hearts to take the life of this noble creature?" half closing one eye, with a look of solemn moral inquiry directed at Guy.

"You would have thought him wonderful, though maybe not so beautiful, if you had met him alone in the woods," Guy answered pleasantly.

"Bears have a way of gitting *outside* of lambs like you, Mr. Murk," said Mad.

“ Ah, my young brother ! Don’t you recognize the young brother, Sister Lingham ? ”

“ Certingly,” said Sister Lingham.

“ These folks don’t know how wicked I be, or they wouldn’t call me brother,” chuckled the youth.

“ All men are our brothers ; all God’s creatures are our brothers,” said the philanthropist. “ That bear is our brother. We love him ; we love all. Is it not so, Sister Lingham ? ”

“ Certingly,” smiled Sister Lingham.

Aaron was disgusted. “ We loved that bear to death : is that the way you love your brothers ? ”

Murk regarded him with his most phlegmatic sapient squint.

“ I think I recall that countenance. A very material brother, Sister Lingham ; an unbelieving brother ; who upon one occasion was urgently advised to take my life : but still my brother ! ” And he offered his hand, which Aaron pressed somewhat malevolently. “ Oh, oh ! ” — the philanthropist straightened his fingers to let the expelled blood circulate again. “ Very cordial, brother, but rather too much of a good thing ! ”

“ Fact,” said Aaron : “ too much brotherly love gets to be a leetle disagreeable sometimes. So I guess we won’t shake hands again right away, brother ! ”

In the mean time, Archy, finding himself in the society of mediums, showed symptoms of jerking. That pleased Mr. Murk, who wagged his fist, and said it was Swedenborg’s wish that the “ mediumistic brother ” should remain. But

Guy pushed him into the boat, which he hastened to get off with its load. Mad and a broken-legged dog accompanied them; making, together with the bear, a quite sufficient freight.

Guy nursed poor Ranger's hurts, while his companions plied the oars. It was now two o'clock.

"I tell you!" said Archy, "I wish I had that basket o' berries I left up on the hill: wouldn't they taste good?"

"'Most any thing would taste good jest now," replied Mad with a famished expression. "I feel as if I had Aaron's clo'es on!"

"Archy," said Guy, examining the bear's wounds, "you are the hero of the day: you drew the first blood."

"Gracious! I did, didn't I! peppered his muzzlo, I swan! Say, didn't I shoot within a mile of him?" Archy appealed triumphantly to Mad, who sneeringly replied that a little charge of bird-shot wasn't any thing.

At the head of the lake the bear was disembarked, and the boat cleansed. The boys had done their share of rowing; and it was now Guy's turn.

"Get a wagon, and don't wait for me," he said, as he set off.

Archy and Mad, leaving Ranger with the bear, went to a farm-house for a team, whilst Guy returned alone with the boat.

Alone on that lake in the wilderness. The day was calm; the water was glassy smooth. Duplicate woods enclosed it

all around, — forests above the surface, and forests inverted below. Not a bird flew over ; not a fish leaped ; not a sound of life, save the oars plashing and the waves lapping. The excitement of the chase was over ; and now Guy had a chance to think.

The lake was long and narrow, and broken into straits and inlets by low jagged shores. It seemed the loneliest lake that ever was. Here dismal ledges just put their dark backs above the still water. All up and down the beaches were scattered fragments of brown stone, that gave to the scene a dreary aspect of desolation. Lines of flood-wood lay at high-water mark around the shores, whitening in the sun. The solitude was oppressive : it seemed too utterly savage and lonesome even for the heron and the wild drake.

Guy rowed slowly by woody points and little sleeping coves ; now in the sun which burnished the lake with fire, and now under the cool shadows of primeval trees. A gloom was on his spirit ; and, while the boat seemed floating over the craters of old volcanoes, he felt that his life was also gliding upon awful abysses glassed over with transient illusions.

For comfort, he reviewed his late experiences of spirit-power, which had at other times filled him with hope and rejoicing. But now he felt only doubts and vague longings, — a faintness and gnawing hunger of the soul. A desire to be fed with fresh experiences burned within him. Was it for that purpose that the Powers which ruled his life had brought him here ? He heard voices, and, glancing over his shoulder,

saw the seeress still sitting on the beach, apart from her companions, musing, and (something whispered) waiting for him.

But he remembered Luey, her fears, and his sacred promise.

Strong as his thirst was to taste once more the wine of spiritual influence, he firmly resolved to resist it; and approached the point, fully intending to return the boat, and depart as soon as courtesy would permit.

But scarcely had the bow touched the sand, when some one sprang into it.

“Push off again!” was spoken rather imperiously by a well-remembered voice.

Guy felt a strange excitement throb through his nerves. He was alone with the seeress. There was fascination in the thought. But Luey? He hesitated.

“Do as I say! won’t you? I have been waiting all this time. It is what I came here to-day for: I knew you would be here. Quick, before any one comes!” And, as he still declined to act, she seized an oar, and pushed off the boat.

When Mad and Archy came with the wagon, they found four hunters sitting around the bear on the beach, talking over the adventure.

“Where is your pitchfork?” asked Aaron.

“Didn’t some one bring it?” said Mad with angry surprise. “Jehiel had it; so did Guy.”

“But you took it afterwards, and threw it to see it stick in the sand,” said Jehiel.

Muttering with discontent, but hoping that he should meet Guy bringing the fork, Mad hurried back through the woods.

The others did not wait, but, finding that they had more than a wagon-load of bear and dogs and men, set off for town. At every house, they had to stop and exhibit their prize.

“What a monster!” said little Doctor Biddikin, perching bareheaded on a wagon-wheel, and looking over. “Most extraordinary! It is the largest bear I ever sor! How did you kill him?”

“He got at the least ca’e’lation six bullets and a knife into him, — not to speak of the dogs, — ’fore he give up,” said Aaron. “Bears are awful contrary ’bout dyin’.”

“Exceedingly tenacious of life,” said the doctor. “You must give me a piece of the meat.”

“You shall have some, if only for that boy’s sake,” — Aaron gave a compassionating glance at poor little Job. “He is starved!”

“Starved? that boy? Job starved?” The wee man straightened himself on the wagon-wheel, with his skinny neck outstretched, as if he was going to flap his arms, and crow. “Starved, indeed! If you could see him at his dinner! He is an enormous eater! an enormous eater! Ain’t you, Job? Tell the truth, Job!”

“Y-a-a-s!” drawled the little wretch with a sickly, inane smile.

“Run to the house, Job, and bring the carving-knife! — An enormous eater!” repeated the doctor. “You must cut us a very large piece, Aaron. But a bad boy!” — in a whisper, — “a very bad boy! untruthful, very untruthful!” — shaking his head and compressing his lips significantly. “He tells lies!”

“He has told one,” said Aaron. “If I should say I was an enormous eater, now,” — swelling his great chest, — “folks might believe me. But that boy! or you, Doctor Biddikin!” — and he humorously took the little man under his arm, lifted him from the wheel, and set him softly, as if he had been an infant, upon the ground. “Poor as ever, I see!” he laughed; while all laughed with him, except the doctor, who put his hands together, with a smirk of offended dignity, and leaned forward on his precise toes, saying, —

“You can hardly call a man poor who owns the largest fortune, probably, in the State.”

“I meant poor in the ribs,” replied Aaron, preparing to drive on. “We all know what a millionaire you be; but you haven’t the heft of a wisp of hay.”

“I am a wronged and distressed man; I confess that,” said the doctor tremulously. “I am a victim of plots. You have wiled my son away, my Madison,” — he shook his shrivelled head with grief and resentment, — “and you keep him from me by your plots and deceits!”

Aaron laughed. “Can’t cut the bear now, doctor,” he said, and drove on. But Jehiel remained behind to speak a comforting word to the poor old man.

“Nobody keeps my son from me, do you say? Don’t you believe that! He were always one of the most dutiful boys, save when he were led away by others. My heart is well-nigh broken. If you see him, do send him home: influence him to come back, if you can. And see that I have a piece of that bear, won’t you? And, wait a moment!” — mysteriously: “can’t you lend me a couple of shillings for a few days?”

Out of pity, Jehiel gave him what change he had, and hurried on.

“That’s the talk! Laugh Jack!” impishly screamed the crow from the eaves.

“Stop your noise, Jack!”

“Ha, ha, ha!” said Jack.

Angry at he knew not what, the doctor looked round for something to throw at the saucy bird. His eyes lighted upon poor little Job standing in the door-yard, with fear in his face, and a carving implement in his hand.

“Ha! come here, sir!” Biddikin concluded that it was Job he was angry at, and not the crow. “Why didn’t you bring that knife before? What did you come out and show yourself to the men for, and get me insulted? You villain!” He took him by the ear, which was conveniently long in consequence of frequent and very thorough stretching, and led him by that appendage into the house.

Madison came presently down the road, and partly because he heard Job scream, but chiefly because he was hungry, resolved to give his parent a call.

“Hello!” he shouted, bursting into the room where Job was undergoing fustigation.

Biddikin started with alarm; but the crow, flying in with the visitor, cried jubilantly,—

“Mad’s come home! Laugh, Jack! Ha, ha! ha, ha!”

Upon which the doctor, recognizing his affectionate boy, rushed to embrace him.

“Look out there!” said Mad in his rowdyish guttural: “you’ll git hooked with the little horns!” And he aimed the pitchfork at the paternal bosom.

“Madison! my son! my long-lost, my darling boy! is it you?”

“Wal, I bet!”

“Give me one embrace!”

“Not a darned embrace!”

“Madison! my son! what do you mean?” gibbered Biddikin. “What for do you come at me with a fork?”

“What for did you go at that boy with a club?”

“I—I were just threatening him.”

“You struck him!—Job,” said the junior, “didn’t he strike you?”

“Y-a-a-s!” gasped poor little Job.

“Job!” cried the senior, “dare you say I struck you?”

“N-o-o!” gasped poor little Job.

“Job, look here! didn’t I see him strike you with that broom-stiek?”

“Y-a-a-s!” faltered the terrified Job.

“Job, speak the truth!” vociferated the doctor menacingly: “*did* I strike you with the broomstick?”

“N-o-o!” said Job.

“There! now remember,” cried Biddikin: “once for all, did I strike you?”

Job caught the junior’s eye, and, concluding that he was most to be feared, gasped out, —

“Y-a-a-s!”

“You mean,” cried the senior, “that you deserved to be struck.”

“Y-a-a-s,” came feebly from the boy’s starved and bewildered soul.

“What for did you deserve it?”

“For telling lies,” he answered like a child reciting his catechism under trying circumstances.

“And what do we do with bad boys that tell lies?”

“Lick ’em!” was the correct response.

“Ha, ha! lick ’em!” screamed Jack.

“And what becomes of bad boys that tell lies, when they die?”

“Go to hell!” was the formal answer.

“Go to hell!” screamed Jack.

“And what becomes of old sinners who learn ’em to tell lies?” demanded Mad in great wrath and disgust. “You treat that boy just as you used to me. You licked me one day for lying, and the next for not lying, Do you wonder I despise and hate you?—you stuffed mouse-skin! you

galvanized toadstool! I'm bad enough, thanks to you; but I swear I'll take Job's part. Come here, Job!"

Job started timorously.

"Don't you go, Job!" Job started back with a gasp.

"You've no business with Job."

"Haven't I? What'll become of him then? What become of t'other boy?" asked the junior with the expression of a laughing hyena. "Say, you dressed-up drumstiek! what become of Martin?"

Biddikin recoiled before that keen, knowing, savage, malicious look.

"Martin—he ran away; you know, you know, he ran away!"

"That skeleton of a boy, with them legs of his, run away?" jeered the junior. "Look here!"—he lifted his malign, accusatory finger,— "I know as well as you that he never left this house."

"'Sh!" interposed the excited senior. "Job, Job, go to the woods for chips, right away." He thrust the boy out. "Madison, why do you talk in this insane manner?"

"'Cause I know! and, if you don't take care, I'll blow on you!"

"I thought you had more sense than to catch up what that reckless medium said!"

"'Twan't what she said, but the way you looked, that told the story."

"I looked!" articulated the frightened little man, "did I— did others notice?"

“They might, if they had suspected what I did.”

“It’s all wrong : there is nothing in it, I assure you !” said Biddikin most emphatically. “And you must take care what you say, or you’ll make mischief.”

“Wal, I ain’t going to kick up a row : only let Job alone, and give me something to eat,” said Madison.

“That sounds like my son ! Sit down : I’ll see what I’ve got.” Biddikin ransacked an empty cupboard “Come now, Madison, stay at home : we’ll live like princes here, — like princes !” — bringing forth a piece of cold corn-cake.

“Like princes !” echoed Mad with scornful laughter. “And is this the grub of princes ?” blowing the unsavory crumbs from his lips, with intent to hit the paternal face.

“They have promised me five dollars a week to live on while they are digging, and a quarter of the money found, if I will only sign papers,” said the doctor. “I’ve stood out so far. I know too much for ’em. I’m suspicious of papers. They have got six thousand dollars pledged, and they are only waiting for me. I think I may consent.”

“Oh, what a fool if you don’t !” cried the junior. “Five dollars a week !”

“And a quarter of the money : that’ll be a brilliant fortune, a very brilliant fortune ! — What’s that ?”

“A pop-gun Guy let me take. I want to hide it. ’Twill come in use some time. I’ll tell him it’s lost.” And Madison concealed the pistol in a corner of the cupboard.

“It will be safe there : I won’t say a word,” said the

doctor with a shrewd smile. "Come, my son! won't you stay? Haven't you got tired of being a servant and degrading yourself?"

"When you are having your five dollars a week, and can afford better fodder than this, then'll be time for you to talk." And shouldering his fork, in spite of threats and importunities, the youth put his cap saucily on one side of his head, and went off, swaggering, and munching johnny-cake.

The bear had by this time arrived at Jehiel's house. Mrs. Hedge saw her husband, and uttered a cry of joy. But Lucy's heart contracted; for, among all the hunters returning safe to their homes with their trophy, she could not see her lover.

Did he not know how anxious she would be? and would he not hasten to re-assure her if he was unhurt? Surely; else he did not love her.

Hannah set out bread and milk and berries for her husband's refreshment. As he ate, he related the adventures of the day. Whilst he was talking, he happened to look out, and saw young Biddikin going by with his pitchfork.

"Perhaps Mad has seen him!" He ran to the door. "Hello, Biddikin! Where's Guy?"

"In a fancy place!" Mad laughed, and entered the yard.

"Did you see him when you went back?" Jehiel inquired, while Lucy listened.

"Wal, I bet! And wished I was where he was." See-

ing indications of something to eat, Mad came boldly into the house. He was a little abashed at sight of Lucy, whom he addressed, however, with off-hand politeness as he sat down. "I guess," said he, "I may as well hold my tongue about Guy!" significantly alluding to her interest in him.

"Is he coming home?"

"I don't see it!" Biddikin chuckled. "Not right away, I guess! Oh, that young woman has got a devil in her! Did you see how she looked at him? Don't care if I do take a bowl of milk! Guy see her over to our house when we had a setting there. She baited her hook for him then: I had my eyes peeled! Wal, berries *be* good!" and he helped himself liberally.

Jehiel and his wife wished him a thousand miles away. But he remained, eating without invitation, and talking without being questioned.

"I didn't tell you where Guy was when I went for the fork. He was in the boat. Good reason why he wanted to take it back there! Sly, Guy is! He was having a fancy time; bet yer life on that! Who do ye s'pose was with him? 'Twas the young woman with the devil in her! Ha, ha, ha!"

Lucy vanished from the room like a ghost.

XVII.

CHRISTINA. — LUCY.



PIQUED at Guy's hesitancy, the seecress with a petulant gesture tossed back the oar.

“ You are not a very gallant youth, Mr. Bannington ! ”

“ You are an exceedingly charming woman, Miss Freze ! ”

“ What do you tell me that for ? ”

“ To win a reputation for gallantry ! ”

She regarded him with a very slight disdainful curl of her imperious lip.

“ You don't wish to accompany me ? Speak honestly ! ”

“ Honestly, then, I am tired.”

“ Is that all ? ”

“ And hungry.”

He folded his arms gravely. The boat was floating from the shore. For a minute she remained silent, fixing her dilating eyes upon him, as if she would drink the inmost meaning of his soul. Then, with a wilful, radiant laugh, she shook her jewelled finger at him : —

“For one hour you are mine! If you are tired, I can row. If you are hungry, I have secret bread reserved for this emergency;” and she uncovered cheese and sandwiches in a napkin.

He took the napkin; she took the oars. The delicate but vigorous little hands managed them not unskilfully; and with an easy motion the boat glided through water smooth as satin, under the cool green forest-shadows.

“If ever I determine on suicide,” said she, “I shall come and throw myself into this lake.”

“Do so,” said Guy; “for that would give a fine finishing touch to its weird and sombre character. ‘*Suicide Pond,*’ — that would sound well. What is your given name?”

“Christina.”

“The place where you throw yourself in shall be called ‘*Christina’s Leap.*’ I’ll see to it.”

She leaned over the side, gazing down intently, and speaking with melancholy softness.

“It looks cool and pleasant in there; and life is feverish and bitter. What is there to keep one here in this world?”

“There is a good deal to keep me,” Guy answered. “I sometimes think the mere breath of life is joy enough. This wild nature, with its clouds, its waters, its crags, fills me full and full! I’ve not done with it yet: there’s juice left and wild honey! Even this sandwich is a solid satisfaction.”

“ You are in the external yet,” she replied. “ You will some time get beyond that, and feel as I do.”

“ That is to say, you have progressed a good deal beyond me. I find a vast amount of cant and spiritual self-conceit among mediums, which I hoped you were free from. ‘ You are in the external yet ; when you have had certain experiences I have had, when you have progressed to a higher plane, when you get to see things from my stand-point ; ’ and so forth.”

“ Let me say what is true, won’t you ? I have been where you are ” —

“ That’s it, that’s the style ! ” said Guy.

“ The world was as much to me as it is to you,” she went on, regardless of his sarcasm. “ And, even now, I can laugh and dance and enjoy ; but the only real consolation I have is in the communion of spirits.”

“ The communion of spirits is a glorious thing, if it is true ; because it demonstrates that life is perpetual ; that the soul, and love, and the sense of joy and beauty, do not cease at death, but continue forever.”

“ Then what is the fear of death ? Come,” she said coaxingly, “ fall overboard with me ! I’ll do it ! ”

“ Thank you, I’d rather be excused. This world is tolerably well got up, on a good plan ; and I’m not so sure of being ready for another. I am a child yet : here I have nestled long, and I have no wish to be weaned from the familiar, dear old bosom.”

“You will talk very differently a year from now. You will be a tired child then, and ask to be put to rest.”

“Perhaps. But, for the present, this blue roof and spacious play-ground for me! This water, this air, this bread and cheese, suffice. Nectar and ambrosia by and by. Hopes and heart-beats, questions and longings of the soul, the endless curiosity, — I haven’t yet lost my relish for these: have you?”

“What is all that without companions?” she replied.

“Have you none?”

“I have been looking longer than ever Diogenes did for a man;” she gave Guy a significant glance. “I wonder if I have found one at last.”

“Don’t you find any women?”

“I hate women!”

“Indeed! I judged as much. The more intensely woman a woman is, the more she hates her own sex, I believe. It isn’t so with men: there is friendship among men.”

“Do you know what has brought us together to-day, Guy Bannington?”

“No; but I should like to know.”

“Then I will tell you something which you won’t laugh at. It was written through my hand this morning that I must come to the picnic, and that I should meet you here.”

“That is singular,” said Guy; “for I have not been near this lake for a year, and should not have come to-day but for the bear.”

“What is more singular,” replied the seeress, “upon the same paper on which I was made to write that, I drew the picture of your bear.”

“When was that?”

“At eight o’clock this morning. The date is on the paper. The paper is in my portfolio, in my room at the hotel.”

“I will accompany you to the hotel, enter your room with you, and give you fifty dollars to produce that paper!”

“I’ll do it for less than that. Here is the key to my portfolio. You shall go with me, and open it if you will grant me one little favor.”

“What?”

“I don’t know yet what it will be; but you are to promise.”

Guy promised. At the instant, Lucy’s image rose before him, pale, beseeching, sad.

“I like you,” said Christina, moving to his side. “Prim, conventional people are the death of me. I want to be lawless: I want the companionship of lawless, glorious souls. You will let me do as I please?”

“Probably; for I am very amiable.”

“You amiable? You are violent, impetuous, domineering; and you can be cruel.”

“Shall I tell you what your are?”

“Yes.”

“You are fitful, fiery, scornful; and you can be vastly impudent.”

“You don’t dare to say you like me!” she laughed.

Guy looked grave. He didn’t answer. His thoughts were far away, and his heart was troubled.

Christina sat down at his feet, silent, very quiet. Her breast heaved with a long, deep sigh. Her head bent pensively until her cheek touched his knee. In spite of himself, he felt a thrill of something more than interest, — a melting sensation towards her, tender and yearning.

“What are you there for?” he asked coldly.

“My place is at your feet.” And she lifted her eyes to his face with a burning look, full of wonder and worship.

“Christina!” he exclaimed, trying to remove her.

In vain: she kept her place.

“My lord and my king!” she said with upturned face, and such a smile as he had seen upon it at their first meeting, sweet, enraptured, divine.

Late that evening, Guy mounted the dark stairway noiselessly, opened Lucy’s door, and entered. No light, no sound, within. He groped his way to the bed-chamber, and passed his hand over the pillow. It had not been pressed.

“Lucy!” he called; and the roar of the brook in the midnight answered him.

He returned to the little sitting-room, wondering, listening, straining his eyes in the darkness, and thinking of Lucy with pity and repentance.

“Guy!” breathed a faint voice from the sofa, — a tender, suffering, and loving voice.

He knelt by her side. She put up her arms, drew his head to her bosom, and burst into sobs of anguish.

“Don’t cry, don’t cry, Lucy! What is the matter? I am here.”

“I have been waiting so long, so long!” She wept, from a heart wrung with misery. “Oh! how could you leave me so? how could you? I thought you would never come again!”

“Have you so little confidence in me?” said Guy softly.

“If you could have known all I have thought, all I have felt, this long day, this long, long night,” she broke forth bitterly, “you surely would have come! But you were in the boat with that woman, and I was forgotten!”

That was a stroke. Guy sat chilled and dumb, answering nothing. Lucy hushed her sobs, waiting for him to acquit himself, and re-assure her of his love. Only the brook moaned.

“Speak! say something!” she entreated in a voice full of pain and passionate appealing. “I am wretched, wretched, wretched! Have mercy on me! have mercy!”

“I have broken my promise,” said he, not tenderly and soothingly, but frigidly and perversely. “I have sinned. I am unworthy of your pure affection.”

“Oh, never, never!” she cried. “Think what I am to you; and never, never say you are unworthy of my affection!”

Guy gnashed his teeth together with fiery inward thoughts,

knowing how he had wronged Lucy, and how he wronged her still with his stubborn icy will, which even love could not thaw.

“My vision, my prophetic vision!” she exclaimed despairingly. “As I lay waiting here in the dark, I saw faces around me, like laughing fiends, and heard voices saying, ‘Lost, lost, lost!’ In the dark and silence I kept seeing the faces, I kept hearing the voices, — ‘Lost, lost, lost!’ — with the roaring of the brook. I prayed that they would stop. I entreated the brook to stop: it was torturing me. I know now what it meant. You wish to be free from me. I will not hold you; I will not, though I die! O my father, my father! you are all I have left: come to me, father!” And she threw herself upon her face.

“God! God!” groaned Guy, “how you make me suffer! I cannot be free from you: Heaven knows, as you should know, that I have neither the power nor the wish to be.”

“Oh! then, when you said, so coldly, that you had broken your promise, why couldn’t you add one word, one little syllable, to soften that cruel sentence, just to assure me that you did not mean to break it?”

“Because I thought you ought to have been satisfied of that without waiting to be told so.”

“Then you did not willingly break it?” she cried eagerly.

“So far from that, it was most unexpectedly and quite unwillingly that I did so.”

With a cry of joy, she flung herself into his arms. He was softened : he strained her to his heart.

But how was he to explain? He knew well that she would not regard as he did the conduct of Christina. Men have boundless toleration for women : women have none for each other. Men excuse, women accuse, — especially when the question is of those feminine foibles which flatter the masculine vanity.

Guy looked upon Christina as a person of keen perceptions, who had seen enough of the hypocrisies and corruptions of society to despise and defy it. She had thrown off its laws, without, however, arriving at the supreme law within herself. Such a woman is always interesting to a man fond of adventure and of the exercise of power ; and, in Christina's case, her mediumship invested her with superior attractions. Guy felt that their relation was of a spiritual character, and that they might benefit each other without wronging Lucy. But, clear as all this was to his own mind, he knew that it would be impossible to make Lucy believe a word of it.

He stated simply, therefore, that the seeress had offered him sandwiches, when sandwiches were very acceptable ; and that she had interested him in a spiritual phenomenon with which he was personally connected. And, passing over circumstances which he thought it unwise to relate, he hastened to call Lucy's attention to a mysterious bit of paper which he brought to her in one hand, with the previously lighted lamp in the other.

Lucy read the following sentence in pencil : —

“Go to the lake to-day. The leader, G. B., will be sent to you there.”

Above this was the date. Beneath it was a drawing of an animal.

She studied the paper long with her red eyes, while Guy urged her to tell him what she made of it.

“It is plain,” she admitted, “that the drawing is intended for a bear; but it isn’t so plain that it was done in the morning before she saw you or the bear at the lake,” she added with perceptible scorn.

“Neither would I readily believe it,” said Guy; “though she told me of the written prediction, which had been left, she said, at the Mt. Solomon Hotel. She gave me a key, and invited me to go with her and her friends this evening, and witness the verification of the story. I was curious enough to go. We all went together to her room. There, in my presence, she opened a desk, in which lay a portfolio. ‘Unlock that,’ said she, ‘with the key I gave you.’ I unlocked it, and with my own hands took out this paper.”

Once more, Lucy studied the writing and the picture. She was pale; her lips quivered; she was evidently not yet convinced. There must have been some legerdemain; or it was all a mere coincidence. But, whatever it was, it stirred up again her jealousy and scorn.

“She calls you *the leader!*” — flinging away the sheet. “And what if she did meet you there? I don’t see the use of a special revelation on the subject!”

“Unhappily, there are many things you do not see.”

“Unhappily, there is one thing I do see!” she exclaimed, pacing the floor with agitation and tears. “I see that there is a plot to dupe you, and it is succeeding. That woman is doing her utmost to take you from me; and you are only too willing to go!”

“Lucy!” said Guy warningly.

“I shall say no more,” — wiping her tears. “Go, if you wish to. I shall exact no more promises to have them broken afterwards, when my heart will be broken with them. My happiness has been short; I might have known it would be; and I have no desire to prolong it at the expense of your freedom.”

She fell upon the sofa. Guy stood before her, looking down upon her frowningly, gnawing his lip to control the fiery words that rose to it.

“And you give me my freedom?” he said calmly, after a pause.

“Freely and entirely.”

“I thank you, both for you and for myself. By leaving me free, you will find that you make me more your own. Whatever I do, I shall remain true to you: I shall always return to you.”

His tones were full of truth and tenderness. She could not resist him. The clouds were breaking; her sunny spirit was shining forth. She reached up her arms, and love and sweet forgiveness united them once more — for a little while.

XVIII.

IN THE FOREST.



FEW days later, Guy received the subjoined note: —

“ You promised to grant me a favor. This is what I am directed to require of you. Find yourself at Dr. Biddikin’s to-morrow at three, P.M. There you will meet a disagreeable little old woman, with yellow hair and a sour temper, named CHRISTINA.”

It bore date the previous evening. The appointed time was at hand.

Now, it so happened that Lucy was expecting him to accompany her that afternoon on a ramble in the woods.

Guy was in a dilemma.

His hunger for spiritual excitement decided him. He despatched Ann Maria with a note informing Lucy that he would be unable to fulfil his engagement with her, and hastened to meet Christina.

On the grass before Doctor Biddikin’s house sat little Job,

amusing his appetite by nibbling raw eorn, and diverting his mind by letting Jaek pick his poekets. At the approach of Guy he jumped up, and looked as if afraid of being whipped for something.

“ He ain’t to hum ! — gone up on the mountain ! ” he answered before he was asked.

“ Is there nobody *in the house* ? ”

“ Nobody but me and Jaek ; ” and he smiled a sickly smile.

“ Is that a joke ? ” said Guy.

“ Y-a-a-s ! ” drawled poor little scared Job, pleading guilty without so much as knowing what a joke was.

The crow then flew to Guy, hooked himself to his waist-coat, and began to pick his poekets, erylng, “ Corn, corn ! ”

“ Go away, you rascal ! ” said Guy.

“ Go ’way, you rascal ! ” echoed Jaek.

And he searched with his beak one poeket after another, gossiping in an unintelligible jargon.

“ Wants something to eat ! ” said Job.

“ Don’t he have enough ? ”

“ N-o-o-o ! ”

“ Don’t you ? ”

“ Y-a-a-s ! I’m a ’normous eater ! ” grinned the little wretch.

“ Did Doctor Biddikin tell you to say so ? ”

“ Y-a-a-s ! ”

“ And do you know what a ’normous eater is ? ”

“Y-a-a-s ! he nors things !”

“Hello !” laughed Guy : “we have etymologists among us !”

“Et a what amongst us ?” said Job, whose mind was on victuals.

“Corn, corn !” said the crow, hanging by Guy’s pockets.

“Did you have any of the bear ?”

“*He* had some !” — meaning the doctor.

“Didn’t he give you any ?”

“N-o-o-o !” drawled Job. “He got me out of the poor-’us. Said ’twas too good for poor-’us’ boys.”

The simplicity with which he attested this miserable truth would have moved a harder heart than Guy’s.

“Come here, my lad !” He placed his hand kindly on the boy’s shoulder. “I’ll see about that bear-meat : you shall have some. Does Biddikin whip you pretty often ?”

“Y-a-a-s !” and Job nestled to his side like one who for the first time in his life had found a protector.

“What for ?”

“’Cause I’m a bad boy. I tells lies !”

“Poor little Job !” said Guy. “Does he whip you hard ?”

“Y-a-a-s ! But he said, ‘Tell ’em no, if folks ask.’”

“Whips you for lying, and then teaches you to lie ! It’s too bad, Job ! Where are your parents ?”

“What’s parents ?”

“Merciful Heaven ! don’t you know what parents are ?”

“Y-a-a-s !” with a gleam of intelligence, — “Adam and Eve !” He remembered his catechism.

“I don’t mean your first, but your last parents, Job ; your father.”

“Never had no father.”

“Nor mother, either ?”

“She died,” said simple little Job, “in the poor-’us’ . Then *he* come and took me.”

“What do you do here ?”

“Git stieks in the woods, and wash dishes.”

“What does he do ?”

“Eats the victuals, and lieks me.”

Too much interested in Job to look out for Jack, Guy did not perceive that the thief was tugging at his watch-chain. He had unhooked it at one end, and was now bent on detaching it at the other. Suddenly out came the watch. Guy made a snatch to recover it, but too late : the pick-pocket was off with his booty.

He flew to the caves, where he laughed and chattered, trying to pull the chain to pieces, and calling out, “Corn, eorn !”

“When he steals any thing, you can’t git it agin,” was Job’s comforting observation. “He’ll hide it somewheres.”

“Is there a gun ?” said Guy, in whose countenance Jack’s doom was written.

“N-o-o-o ; but there’s a ladder.”

It lay on the ground by the fence. Guy placed it against

the house, and mounted, cane in hand. Jack scolded ; Guy flattered.

“ Go 'way ! ” said Jack.

“ Why, Jack ! ” said Guy, holding the cane behind him.
“ Jack mustn't steal ! pretty Jack ! pious Jack ! ”

“ Let Jack alone ! ” screamed Jack ; and, catching up his booty, he flew with it over the roof.

Before Guy could get down and run round the house, he was out of sight.

“ Time flies — in a rather too literal sense ! ” said Guy.
“ Where is he, Job ? ”

“ Guess he went to the woods, ” said Job.

Beyond an intervening ridge or two rose the woody mountain-side, whose vast and tangled wildernesses foreboded the hopelessness of a search in that direction. However, Guy saw nothing else to be done ; and, as Christina had not arrived, he set off in the pursuit.

Over hill and through hollow he ran, till he came to a brook, which he was crossing, when a voice called him. Looking down the stream, he saw, a few rods below, Christina.

“ Am I late ? ” she said. “ I got away from the company as soon as I could. They are all upon the mountain. What time is it ? ”

“ Time ! ” echoed Guy. “ Everybody will ask me the time ! If you had kept your appointment, you would have saved me very valuable time which I lost waiting for you. ”
And he related his adventure.

“It was to teach you,” said she, “how riches take to themselves wings.” She was radiant : she laughed bewitchingly. “The crow shall be called procrastination ; for he is the thief of time. Give up the chase, and follow me : I am of more value than many watches.”

“A watch reminds us of the time ; you cause us to forget it,” said Guy.

“All the better !” she replied with charming sweetness. “Let my face be your dial, and I will tick to you golden moments ! Come !”

“What is the enterprise ?”

“A tramp in the woods. We shall want a shovel. Go to that old cellar yonder, and you will find one.”

He brought a spade, and they entered the woods.

“Sit here,” said she, “till I have recovered my breath ;” and they rested on a rock by the brook-side. “Do you know what I want of you ?”

“To dig sassafras-roots, or to help you bury a dead lover.” And he added, looking at her fixedly, —

““Oh your sweet eyes, your low replies !
A great enchantress you may be :
But there was that across his throat
Which you had hardly cared to see !””

She started.

“Why do you look at me so ? What do you mean ?”

“I was only quoting Tennyson : —

“Lady Clara Vere de Vere,
 There stands a spectre in your hall ;
 The guilt of blood is at your door ;
 You changed a noble heart to gall !”

With a look of pain she sprang from the rock, walked swiftly a dozen paces, then, turning, stood before him.

“What do you mean ?” she repeated imperiously. “Tell me quick ! Tell me, I say !” stamping her foot.

“Why, my lady,” said Guy, surprised and curious, “I was only reciting poetry.”

“But what put it in your head ?”

“I don’t know.”

“You do ! You have heard — Am I a Lady Clara ?”

“By my soul, I am beginning to think so !”

She put up her hand, turning from him with an expression of misery ; then, bending over the brook, she washed her hands and bathed her brow.

“I’ll tell you all about it some time,” — drying her face with her handkerchief. “It’s a strange story ; but I am not a De Vere. Come, bring your shovel.”

“Is there really a corpse ?”

“Yes.”

“What an enigma you are ! You almost make me think you are in earnest.”

“I am altogether in earnest. But ’tis not my dead, thank Heaven !”

“To be buried ?”

“No: to be unburied.”

“Explain yourself, or I won’t stir an inch.” And Guy threw down the spade, folding his arms, and sitting on the rock.

“Listen, then.” She came and sat by his side. “The first time I was in Biddikin’s house — you remember?”

“Yes: you spoke of disagreeable influences, and of some person having died there.”

“I saw the dead body of a child, and the living spirit of the child standing by, pointing at it. The same picture has been presented to me several times since. Then have followed visions of Doctor Biddikin. Now I see him carry the dead child in his arms; and now he is digging with a shovel in the woods, where we are going to dig.”

“Christina! And is it for this you have sent for me here?”

“I did not know what it was for when I wrote to you. I did not know until to-day how I was to get here. Then a party was unexpectedly got up. I came with them. We went up on the mountain. There I was trying to obtain some impressions with regard to the money, when I saw distinctly a peculiar bank in the woods; the body of the child buried by the roots of a tree; on the other side a rock; the brook running close by; a great ravine below. And the words came to me, ‘Go and search.’ I stole away from the company, and met you.”

“I fear there is something in it,” said Guy. “One day,

when I was sitting with our little housemaid, Ann Maria, a spirit came and rapped out the name *Martin*. He gave his age, — ten years; and said he died at Doctor Biddikin's. This was all I could get from him. I had never known of such a boy by name, and I inquired of Mad about him. 'I know who you mean,' said he. 'That was Martin: he ran away.' I asked the particulars of the running-away. 'Once when I had been off,' he said, 'and came home, he was gone, and we never heard of him afterwards: that's all I know.'"

"But not all his father knows," said Christina.

"It has an ugly look," said Guy. "But what's the use of meddling with the affair? I've no ghoulish appetite to be scratching up dead bodies."

"It is necessary the body should be found, or at least sought," replied Christina. "Perhaps these things are all illusions. We can't have too much proof, whether they are true or false. I have seen the buried child; I have seen the buried money. If we can find the one, as it has been shown to me, why not the other?"

"How did you come by the shovel?"

"That's as much a mystery as any thing. I knew nothing of any shovel till I sent you — or the spirits sent you — to the old cellar for it."

"I swear, it takes faith to believe these things! Come, now, with your magic, find me my watch: then I will believe; then I will do whatever you require of me."

"Will you help me dig for the body?"

“ Yes, and for the money too, provided we find the body.”

“ Remember your words. Take the bawble !” and she drew the lost watch from her bosom.

Lucy had all things prepared for the anticipated ramble, when Guy’s letter came with its shock of disappointment.

She sat down to sew. But her heart was not in her work ; it was not in that narrow room : it had been all day among the trees, by the watercourse ; and it drew her thither now, though she must go alone.

Out into the woods, therefore, she stole, where the brook sang its loud gushing song ; where the bluish golden sunlight barred the hazy atmosphere lodged in the forest-tops ; where leafy clusters of scarlet and orange and pale gold were beginning to variegate the summer foliage ; where the ghosts of happy days and dead loves came out of the gloom to meet her, wrapping her heart also in soft, sun-barred haze, and singing to her with voices far off, veiled and mournful.

The cool depths of the forest stretched away before her with an awful yet sweet aspect of loneliness. Tender thoughts, tantalizing fancies, something delicious and vague and evanescent, she knew not what, seemed to lurk in every nook, and flee at her approach.

“ O Happiness !” she said, “ it is you I am always playing hide-and-seek with, — you fitting, fleeting shade !”

She reached the rock where Guy had discovered her retreat one ever-memorable morning. She sat down again

by the torrent, and recalled that time, and the changes since that time ; gazing into the bubbling and beaded water ; gazing into the vast and misty sea of the future, towards which she was drifting, drifting, on the waves of another stream.

Perturbed, pierced with the keen agony of doubt, she rose, and threaded the forest. Farther than ever before, she advanced to meet the brook coming down. Its gladness and beauty reminded her of scenes, which she had heard Guy describe, far up in the gorge of the mountain. Pain and desire urged her on. She came out upon an upland field. Before her stretched the eastern range, all glimmering in blue and gold. There, coiling high and white, wound the snake-like mountain-road. On the right were the columnar crags, with the pyramidal ruins beneath, just visible above billowy verdure. Between the crags and the road was a thick-wooded section of the hill, through which a branch of the brook descended. She felt a wild impulse to visit it. She set out in haste.

All breathless and trembling, she reached the jungly recesses of the gorge. There was no path ; and she had to make her way through closely interlocked branches of young hemlocks, which harassed her with their hedge-like entanglements, and low, dead, sharply projecting limbs. On these she tore her clothes and wounded her hands. But she persevered, until there appeared before her a hushed and dusky greenwood, rising on the mountain-side with its lofty erected trunks and dim spaces.

She advanced with feet that hesitated at their own soft rustling tread. Above her the spotted sunshine slept like leopards on the boughs. The plaint of waterfalls was just audible ; towards which she made her way. And now, arrived at the brink of a steep bank, a snowy wonder met her eyes.

It was a cascade, bright and curved, dividing the hillside with its flashing eimeter.

She uttered a cry of delight, which fell back heavily upon her heart at the thought which instantly followed, — that Guy should be with her there, but was not.

She did not linger. Wonders still beyond awaited her. An almost unbroken chain of waterfalls led her on by a hundred links of discovery and surprise. Few had ever penetrated that secret spot. Female footprints had never before pressed those mosses and old leaves ; eyes of woman had never before gazed upon that necklace of cascades dropped from the mountain's breast. Every step was a rapture and a regret. How beautiful ! But why had she come without Guy ?

Sometimes she climbed the stairway of the brook, in the cool scissure of the rocks. From profound recesses, forever chill and dim, she looked up at the sunshine on the leaning trees a hundred feet above her head. She imprinted the dank gravel and sand of mossy nooks ; she flitted like a bird over the broad sloping ledges ; she pulled herself up steep places by the boughs of trees. At times, by her feet, or deep in the fissure beneath her, or now high on the rocks

above, the Protean water shifted and shone. It gleamed far off like a white statue in a dark niche. It broke into foam and spray on jutting crags, and gathered itself together again in tremulous, surprised pools. Behind screens of foliage it danced like nymphs in snowy drapery. It dripped in a thousand slender threads from long moss-fringes, veiling the blind black front of some Cyclopean rock. It lurked dark and shuddering among the great bowlders and in slimy clefts. Down long, slant grooves it slid and crawled like cream. It rippled a magic ribbon from the lip of the ledge, as if the hill had "oped its ponderous and marble jaws" to rival the conjuror's art; and now, through craggy teeth, it gushed like milk.

Weary at length, Lucy laid herself down upon the roots of a great tree that overleaned the chasm. There she reclined, listening to the never-ceasing splash and drizzle of the water, and watching a silver sheet poured over a broad shelf into a misty cave below; when into the murmurous solitude came a sound like human voices.

She started, lifted her cheek from her hand, looked all around, but saw no one. Again, — clear, ringing voices! And now she perceived, emerging from the wilderness above, two figures.

They were descending the opposite bank. From root to root, by saplings and shrubs, they let themselves down into the cavern. Leaping from the edge of the solid, water-worn wall, one of them — a man — landed upon the gravelly floor, and, reaching up, took in his arms the other, — a woman, — whom he placed by his side.

They sat down on a fragment of rock. The mist of the cascade enveloped them. The agitated waters of the basin rippled at their feet. All around were upheaved strata and overhanging trees; on the roots of one of which lay Lucy, stunned with jealousy and despair.

XIX.

THE CAVERN OF THE CASCADE.



ENTERING the woods on their strange errand, Guy and Christina had not proceeded far by the brook-side when the seeress paused. It was a dismal place. Dark hemlocks and spruces thickly overshadowed it. Below it opened a black ravine, into which the brook rushed with hollow murmurs. On the brink was a huge boulder overgrown with lichens. A birch-tree was near by. Between the rock and the birch Christina stood, her features pallid, her hands cold and rigidly closed, her body shudderingly convulsed.

“This is the spot,” she said in a voice unlike her own. “Here dig.”

Guy leaned upon his spade by the rock, watching her, appalled by her preternatural aspect and the sepulchral significance of her words. He had no heart for the work: he did not move to obey.

“Dig!” she repeated with authority. “Under her feet” — as if it were another speaking — “lie the bones of

murdered Martin. At her side stands the living Martin, together with a numerous company who have brought you here for this work. Lose no time, but dig ! ”

Guy marked the spot with the spade. She stepped aside, and, after a few spasmodic movements, threw off the influences that were upon her.

“ It is awful ! ” said she. “ Can you stand there, and feel nothing ? ”

“ I feel creeping sensations not agreeable to the flesh. Let the dead rest. ”

“ Do you believe any thing in it ? ” whispered Christina, pale and excited.

“ Not much. I can't discover that the ground here has ever been disturbed. We'll see. ” Guy thrust in the spade. It struck solid stone. “ There is the ledge, ” said he, with a feeling of relief. “ There is not depth enough of soil for a grave. ”

“ Are we a couple of fools ? ” cried Christina. “ 'Tis the first time I have ever had such clear and strong impressions, and been deceived. Be sure of the ledge. ”

He thrust in the spade again and again, and still found, a few inches beneath the surface of the soil, a sub-surface of rock. Christina sank upon the ground, dismayed.

“ What do you think of me ? ”

“ I think you have been mistaken ; and I am not sorry, ” he frankly answered.

“ Oh ! but am I not guilty of a shallow piece of impos-

ture?" she said bitterly. "Come away. Once duped is enough. I shall never trust my impressions again. I am angry and ashamed."

"Hello!" said Guy. He had struck in the spade in another place. "There is no ledge here!"

He threw off the dirt rapidly, and discovered that what he had mistaken for the ledge was only a large flat stone. He now removed his coat, and fell to work in earnest. The slab was soon tumbled over upon the ground. It was tolerably easy digging for about a foot farther; when he struck another slab, similar to the first, but of smaller dimensions. From this he scraped the dirt, and stopped to rest.

"You promised, that, while I was digging, you would tell me how you came by the watch."

"There was not much witchcraft about that. I saw Jack flying with something into the woods. He sat on a limb, and tried to break the chain. 'Come here, Jack!' said I; and immediately he flew towards me, and dropped the watch at my feet."

"But there *was* witchcraft in it!" exclaimed Guy. "Such things happen only to you. Birds and beasts, and spirits of the earth and air, do your bidding. Christina, I as firmly believe that the dead boy lies under this stone as that I stand on it!"

He recommenced digging. The second slab was soon taken out. Beneath it the soil was soft and light. He threw up a fragment of rotten cloth. Whilst Christina was examining it, he continued to dig. Suddenly he stopped.

“Never any thing more in this world or the next shall astonish me! I believe in ghosts and prophecy! Look!”

“What is it? cried Christina. “Hair?””

“Human hair, Christina!”

“Horrible! horrible!”

“Just a little tuft,” said Guy; “once flaxen, and once a wavy lock on Martin’s head! Once his mother combed and curled it, and thought it pretty. I am sick at heart.”

“Let us be satisfied!” she whispered.

“I am satisfied. Why uncover this dreadful thing? Let’s throw back the dirt, go home, and hold our tongues.”

“Scrape away a little dirt there;” and she dropped a pebble.

The spade rubbed something hard, which was not stone.

Shortly after, Guy got up out of the pit, and leaned against the rock. For a long time they did not speak, but only looked at each other. The wind, rising, shook the great trees over them, and the brook still fell with sullen splash into the ravine.

“Is it not dreadful?” said Christina.

“I was thinking of another who stood here once; of the night when he ‘bore his dread burden down here,’” said Guy.

“There was no moon. The woods were black and awful. He dug in the darkness to the dirge of the wind and the water. It sounded to him like the wail of a lost soul.”

“I pity him!” said Christina. “But how short-sighted! Why didn’t he tumble the body down into the ravine? There

it might never have been discovered ; or, if it had been, it would have appeared that the boy had fallen from the bank, and been killed."

" Perhaps he brought it here with that purpose. Perhaps he flung it down there, and fled. But the staring horror, naked to the eye of God, would not let him rest. Night and day it haunted him ; day and night he saw it tumbled down there in the water among the rocks. He came at last, and covered it up out of sight, and placed over it these slabs to prevent the wild beasts from digging it up. Perhaps the act of burial did, in some sort, relieve his soul. I hope it did. What a heart he must carry in his bosom, at the best ! "

" In his heart, not here, the dead is buried ! " sighed Christina.

" Not for all the world would I have such a sepulchre in my breast ! " Guy answered.

After that he shovelled back the earth ; but, instead of replacing the stones as he had found them, he set them up, one at the head, the other at the foot, of the little grave.

" It is finished ! " said Christina. " Let us wash our hands of this corruption, and cleanse our minds of the memory of it. "

" Come with me, " said Guy. " I know a rare spot. The very atmosphere of it is a bath to the soul. "

They descended the hillside along by the ravine. A furlong or two below, the stream fell a bright cascade into a misty cavern. This they entered, and sat down, with the

cool vapor of the cascade drifting past them, and the agitated waters of the basin rippling to their feet. They did not talk; but, having washed their hands, they sat silent in the roar of the waterfall. Suddenly Christina knelt upon the wet sand.

“You strange creature!” cried Guy: “what are you there for? Get up!”

She looked up at him with a pale, cold face, half veiled in mist.

“Shall I not obey Heaven and my own soul?” she asked.

He was silent, awed by the white and illumined countenance.

She bared his feet, and washed them in the water of the basin, and wiped them with the hair of her head.

“Woman! woman! what are you doing to me?”

Her clothes wet, her hair all heavy and tangled, she bowed down her face, and kissed his right foot. A sharp thrill pierced his soul at that kiss. No taint of human passion touched him. He shuddered with an ineffable sense of divine mystery and love. Upon the head bowed before him he laid his hand.

“O God our Father! O Christ our Saviour!” he prayed aloud, “teach us the meaning of these things!”

And, bending over, he kissed Christina’s forehead.

Then Lucy, stung to wildness, her soul reeling and sick, crept away, thinking that she would lie down somewhere in the woods, and die.

XX.

JOB AND HIS BENEFACTOR.

LITTLE Job, left alone after Guy's talk with him, kindled his imagination with visions of a great banquet of bear. His idea of heavenly felicity, if called for that afternoon, would have been found to involve a liberal supply of that rare kind of meat. In his Paradise, bill-of-fare and fill-of-bear would have been perpetually and euphoniously synonymous.

The hungry child sucked his fingers in fancy over the indefinitely promised repast, until he concluded it would be edifying to take a peep at this necessary ingredient of bliss. The doctor kept some in a prohibited tub down cellar. Thither goes Job, removes the cover, pulls up his sleeve, introduces his grimy little hand into the weak brine, and fishes up a pound and a half of happiness.

He grins at it hungrily, not doubting that, raw and salt as it is, it would taste good, and comfort the gnawing; disconsolate stomach of him. If he only durst! But unfortunately, ever since, on an occasion of wrath, he fell into the hands of

Biddikin, and came out with a numerical deficiency of front teeth, his bite betrays him. Rinds and crusts seem formed to retain the marks of his dental irregularities. He cannot nibble any thing, but the doctor, with his keen anatomical perception, is fatally certain to discover the depredation, and, holding up the bit of bread or cheese, to shout, "Your teeth, Job! bring the whip, Job!" Therefore, with the exception of such substances as milk and gruel, which do not have to be bitten off, whatever the little wretch tastes furtively he commonly continues to nibble in the vain hope of effacing with each subsequent bite the prints of previous ones, until, like Justice Monkey, he finishes the morsel, — a feat which he longs to perform with this solid lump of ursine flesh; but hesitates, thinking that, if the bear does not kill him, the doctor will.

"How does doctor get a piece off?" he asks himself aloud. "Bites it? No: cuts it."

This suggests a knife. He knows where there is a rusty one in the cellar. It is brought; and saw, saw, it goes, until a little piece of the meat comes off in the grimy fingers, and the big piece spatters back into the tub.

"I'm a 'normous eater!" chuckles Job, with a glow in his features like fire in dull punk.

He sucks the meat a little, but not much, before he resolves that it will be an improvement to wash off the brine as he has seen Biddikin do. And, after all, raw bear is not his ideal. Why not, with a little fire, endeavor to realize his aspirations?

A few coals remain after the doctor's dinner. To rake them out of the ashes, add a few chips, and kindle a good blaze, is pleasant work to hungry, anticipating Job. Then to the fire goes the sputtering bit of Bruin, with a stick thrust through it for a spit. How good it smells! It matters little how it smokes and burns. He holds it in the blaze, and looks at it, and turns it, until the stick resembles the Pole, with the Bear revolving round it.

He does not stay to cook it much. One with whom meat has always been so rare must not look to have it well done. Night is approaching; and Biddikin may return to intercept the banquet.

Biddikin has in fact, some time since, taken abrupt leave of his spiritualist friends, among whom there exists, without any kind of doubt, as he thinks, a plot to swindle him. They will not dig unless he will sign papers. Shrewd Biddikin is skittish of signing papers. To let them do the work, defray all expenses, and give him the treasure when found, would exactly suit the penniless old millionaire. But they object to such an arrangement: hence a rupture. And Biddikin is hurrying alone from the mountain.

Swift and straight he goes, as if the odor of Job's cooking had reached his nostrils. But what possesses him here to diverge from the common path, and make a little circuit down through the woods?

One would think he would carefully avoid that spot yonder by the ravine. It can hardly be a comfort to go there, or

even to think of it. But who knows what fascination there is in the crime that refuses forever to be forgotten?

Perhaps he wishes to see if every thing remains as when he last came to look and satisfy himself that all was well. When on the spot, the ground seems firm beneath his tread, and he feels how foolish his fears are. His secret is safe. Out of that little grave the dead will never rise. This is the sense of security he likes; and for this he comes often to the lonesome bank where the rock is and the tree.

But no sooner is he gone than the dogs snuff out his secret; the beasts of the forest scratch it up. He imagines a thousand mischances, and sees the dead face of the boy uncovered in the sight of heaven and the eyes of men.

These nightmares of the brain draw him once more to the unhallowed place this hazy afternoon.

The tremor of anxious expectation subsides as he comes in sight of the well-known landmarks, and finds them unchanged. Pathless and dim stretch the forest spaces. No snuffing dogs; no group of amazed and indignant neighbors. Biddikin smiles pallidly in the ghastliness of his wretched triumph. The wind among the trees, the brook dashing into the ravine, are not cheerful sounds; but then they whisper of the solitude which he hopes will ever reign there. The interlaced hemlocks and spruces shed a gloom which is not enlivening to the spirit; yet they seem to screen from the blue eye of heaven the scar in the earth's violated bosom.

But what unforeseen portent is this?

A beam of sunshine, like the finger of God, reaches down through the sombre and shuddering leafage, and touches the one dread spot betwixt the rock and the tree.

All around is gloom: only the little grave has the index of light upon it, — an awful omen.

Superstition and vertigo seize the guilty man. He sinks upon a fallen log. With shaking hands he adjusts his spectacles, and looks again; while a freezing fear creeps swiftly over his flesh.

The prodigy is not what it seemed. More horrible still: the ground has been disturbed, and what appeared sunshine is the fresh yellowish soil thrown up over the grave.

And, lo! the tombstones at the head and at the foot!

The soul of Biddikin shrivels; his flesh seems falling from his bones. But he rallies; he recovers from his swoon of terror, and listens, and looks all around. He has but one hope, — that ambushed eyes are not watching him.

He will not come nearer the grave. There shall be no proof against him. Who can affirm that he ever did Martin any harm? “Is it indeed true that his body has been found? Buried in the woods, do you say? Gentlemen, you astonish me! Then he did not run away, as we supposed? And the things that were stolen from me — alas that I ever accused him! They were no doubt taken by thieves, who went to the house and murdered him, and then hid him in the woods. Yes, by all means, gentlemen, let us ferret out the assassins, and bring them to justice.”

Thus Biddikin rehearses his part, sitting there on the log, and watching to see if he is watched. He acquits himself triumphantly before imaginary juries. On the whole, he thinks he will feel better now that the grave has been discovered ; and perhaps better still if there is an investigation, and he can air his eburneal heart and its ghastly secret a little by talking freely, and fortify himself by making his innocence clear to the world.

His limbs gain strength each moment : he can walk now ; and he sets out homewards. The terrible pressure, which has sometimes almost driven him to go and confess his guilt, lets up a little. But he is still beset by superstition and mystery. He fancies a thousand eyes following him ; and the vulture Dread will prey upon him, he foresees, until the discovery of the grave has been explained, and he has faced suspicion.

The sun is setting. The woods cast their vast shadows before him as he hurries home. Twilight sits dim on the mountain ; but its coolness and quiet bring no rest to his fevered mind. Every noise, every unusual sight, has a terror in it. What is yonder ? Smoke from his kitchen chimney : another mystery. No doubt, even now the officers of the law are sitting round his hearth, waiting for him with manacles and a rope. He considers himself no better than a hanged man. He approaches tremblingly. It is a frightened, glaring face that appears an instant at the window. What ! nobody but little Job ? All this consternation of smoke raised by him ?

Biddikin sees the boy squatting on the floor there, roasting his meat by the fire ; but Job sees not Biddikin.

It is the last turn : the bear falls from the burnt stick into the ashes. Job picks it out with his fingers, and places it on a chip. It will do : the moment of fruition has arrived ; relish and ravishment wait upon his tongue. He opens his mouth to admit the morsel just as the door opens to admit the doctor. " Job ! you villain ! what does this mean ? " It means wrath and retribution, Job is perfectly well aware ; and the meat falls from his hand, and his nether jaw falls from the upper, and he gasps out, —

" Hungry ! — something t' eat ! "

" Hungry ? what business have you to be hungry ? " rasps the harsh voice of Biddikin. " Where did you get that meat ? "

The miserable child knows that he might as well be dead as confess ; and life is sweet even to those who taste only its dregs.

" Man come along and give it to me, " says poor little frightened Job.

There is a vagueness about the bare epithet *man*, which to the doctor's scared imagination conveys much. He demands to know what man. Job has Guy in his mind ; but thinks, if he names him, Biddikin will ask Guy if he gave Job meat. Guy will say no : then woe to Job ! So he falters, " Don't know. "

" Which way did he come from ? "

“That way;” and Job, in his bewilderment, indicates the direction in which Guy went.

“From the woods?” demands Biddikin with chattering teeth.

“Y-a-a-s!” draws Job.

“How did he look?” says the doctor.

“Great big man,” says Job.

“What did he say?”

“Said I ought to have some.” And Job ventures to pick up the meat.

“Tell me every word he said: I shall whip you if you don’t; oh, I shall whip you almost to death if you don’t!” And Biddikin adds effect to the menace by producing a strap.

“Told me not to tell,” uttered Job, sucking the meat.

Biddikin pounces upon him. Job tries to think; but both memory and invention fail him, and he can only articulate, —

“In the woods, — hunting for something.”

This loose allusion to the lost watch, Biddikin applies directly to the search for Martin’s grave. He sits down, his eyes glassy, his face like ashes. Job takes advantage of the lull to regale himself.

“Did he ask for me?”

“Y-a-a-s!” — munching.

It is at all times a grief to Biddikin to watch that boy eat; and to see him sit there now so stoically, tearing and chewing like a little harpy, rapt and absorbed in his viand, puts

a fury into him. Job knows what is coming. Those eyes never glitter so but affliction is swiftly to ensue. He vacillates between hunger and fright, but concludes to make the most of his meat. Gratification of appetite is a rare event with him, whereas flagellation is altogether too common. He accordingly sticks to the meat, trying to swallow it as the doctor strikes and beats him.

The door flew open, and Christina stood on the threshold, — a spectre to Biddikin, but a joy to Job.

Without speaking, she stood there, with a countenance of sorrow, regarding the miserable pair. Job made haste to finish his banquet; whilst Biddikin rubbed his hands, and stammered, —

“ Beg your pardon, madam! I were correcting this boy. A very bad boy; ain’t you, Job?”

“ Y-a-a-s, awful bad; wicked!”

“ Very wicked!” said the doctor: “ he knows it. Tells lies; don’t you, Job?”

“ Y-a-a-s!” grinned the starveling. “ Awful lies! I’m a ’normous eater!” — smacking and licking his chaps.

“ Bad, very bad! — wicked, dreadful wicked!” muttered the doctor.

“ And who is not?” said the pale prophetess at the door. “ Is there one good? Not one!”

“ Ah, that indeed!” grimaced Biddikin. “ But Job” — and he shook his head at the boy’s desperate case.

“ It would be well for you and me, Doctor Biddikin, if we

had no greater sins on our souls than that poor child!" said Christina.

"Very true. We are all sinners, great sinners," — caressing his skinny, trembling hands. "What can I do for you, madam?" — with ghastly affability.

"Invite me in," said Christina.

"Ah! excuse me: come in!" And he stood twisting and simpering, in the endeavor to be civil; while he would about as lief have seen the avenging angel enter his house as the dangerous clairvoyant.

"Won't you ask me to sit down?" said Christina.

"Ah, yes! Pray, sit down!" And, bustling about, he brought a broken chair, which he dusted, and placed for her.

"A chair for yourself, doctor."

He seated himself near her, and spread his handkerchief on his knees, and put his thumbs together over it, and smirked, and played glad to see her.

"Some men!" said little Job, just as footsteps and a loud knock were heard.

Biddikin gave a wild start; but Christina motioned him to keep still. Job opened the door; and Mr. Murk, the philanthropist, put in his nose.

"Ah, sister! Your absence has occasioned some alarm. The friends have been looking for you."

"Tell them to go without me. I shall spend the night with Doctor Biddikin."

An announcement which filled the involuntary host with dismay.

XXI.

ANOTHER GRAVE IS OPENED.



SHOULD be most happy — the honor — but, I regret to say, there isn't a room in my house ! ”

Christina smiled.

“ I — I mean a room to offer a lady. Under other circumstances, I should be delighted. I — I — wouldn't I, Job ? ”

“ Y-a-a-s ! ” said Job.

“ But you — you couldn't think of sitting up all night, you know ! ” — with a livid smile.

“ Why not ? — for I am sure you will be gallant enough to sit up with me : won't he, Job ? ”

“ Y-a-a-s ! ” said Job.

“ That settles it, doctor. Now, what have you got for supper ? ”

“ I — I declare ! ” stammered the distressed little old man : “ I believe — Eaten up every thing in the house, haven't you, Job ? That boy ! — he's a perfect vampire, a cormorant ! ”

“Indeed! What a pity he don’t fat up a little!”

“Fat? A bullock a day wouldn’t fat him. The quantity of food he consumes is perfectly incredible: isn’t it, Job?”

“Y-a-a-s!” said Job, with an inane stare, as if it *was* perfectly incredible.

Christina opened her porte-monnaie. “Here, Job! Go to the neighbors. Say the doctor has company, and you want the best that is to be had, — bread, milk, butter, cake, tea.”

At Biddikin’s suggestion, she wrote down a list of the articles she required, and despatched Job with it; while the doctor began to think her visit might be, after all, rather an occasion for thanks than a cause for alarm.

“How you need a woman to keep your house for you!” she said, looking into his closets. “Ah! you have a daughter in the spirit-world, doctor! She is here now. She glides about the room: she shows mo what to do. She says sho is with you when you never know it,” she continued softly, with a changed expression, setting the table as quickly and handily as if she had always been accustomed to the house.

Biddikin gazed as at an apparition. It was many years since his daughter, or any woman, had lighted that gloomy abode with her presence. Memories thronged upon him.

“It makes mo sad to think of you alone here all winter. Isn’t it dreary?”

“Excuse mo — I — you overcome me! I can’t speak!”

“Have you no friends?”

“Not one!” faltered the old man. “My brother gives me the lease of this house; but he never comes to see me. And now even my son has been taken from me. You see before you a man with a broken heart!”

“Ah, doctor, the world is full of such hearts! We suffer that we may have pity for the sufferings of others.”

“Pity? No: none can know; none can sympathize; nobody ever felt the keen anguish!” And, with his convulsed left hand, involuntarily the doctor made the movement of a serpent writhing into his heart.

“Don’t be too certain of that,” answered Christina. “I never yet found a sorrow so deep that I could not go to the bottom of it, and bring up a pearl of hope, as divers do.”

She kept about her work; while the trembling old man watched her wistfully, his countenance betraying fear, bewilderment, and a dawning faith that in this frail woman’s form help from Heaven had come to him, to comfort and to save.

The messenger presently returned with a plentiful supply of provisions. The table was soon loaded, the tea was made, and the firelight shone upon a scene of cheerfulness which had not within the memory of Job been witnessed in that house.

“Come, doctor! supper is ready,” said Christina.

“Ah, forgive me!” He started as from a dream. “So many things come up! To see the tea steaming there, and a woman sitting beside it” — He paused, choking with emotion.

“ You must reflect that the woman sitting beside it is hungry,” said Christina. “ Come, Job ! ”

“ Job ! ” exclaimed the doctor, his voice changing instantly to the habitually sharp tone in which he addressed the poorhouse child, “ why don’t you be getting sticks to keep up the fire ? ”

Christina set down the tea-pot, and looked up in sorrowful astonishment.

“ How can you speak so to that poor boy, doctor ? ”

“ I — I were not aware — I’m a good master to you ; ain’t I, Job ? ”

Job assented with his usual sickly grin, and drawing “ Y-a-a-s.”

“ Doctor Biddikin, you are a harsh and cruel master ! ” and all the disdain of her nature flashed angrily and witheringly upon him. “ You don’t know how to be a good master, you have grown so hardened. I’ll show you the difference.”

The old man, who had been gazing at her a minute before with an expression which betrayed how much he felt drawn to her for refuge and for solace, writhed and cowered before her ; while, imitating his fierce tone and manner, she said, —

“ Job ! why don’t you start ? Get those sticks, or I’ll take a stick to you ! — Is that the way he talks to you, Job ? ”

“ Y-a-a-s ! ” said Job, getting his basket, thinking it was all in earnest.

“Ah, no, Job!” Her voice changed to a wonderfully contrasting softness. “Never mind the sticks, my child. Come to the table, and be happy once in your life. Poor little Job! you have a hard time, at the best; and you deserve all our kindness. — Does he ever speak in that way?”

“N-o-o; not to me. He does to Mad sometimes,” said Job, with a wishful, wondering look. Christina sighed.

“Well, he will speak to you so after this, I hope,” she said. “Come!”

“Won’t let me come to table when he does.”

“Doctor Biddikin won’t!” she exclaimed.

“Ah — yes — come, Job! I haven’t been in the habit — but of course since you desire it. I were bred in a very aristocratic family, and have had servants.”

“Oh, what a pride it is that can keep alive in all this misery! I should have thought,” she said with sad and pitying scorn, “it would have starved out long ago.”

She placed Job at the table, and bade him eat. The doctor endeavored also to sup like a person with a good appetite and a clear conscience. But ever-recurring recollections of a grave in the woods made his soul sicken and his gorge rise; and the banquet was for the most part left to Job, who did it ample justice.

“You are ill, doctor,” said Christina.

“I am very well, — very well indeed!” Biddikin assured her. “I have an excellent appetite, as you see. I have eaten prodigiously!” And he elaped his hands before his

stomach, leaning over them, and smiling across the table at his guest with sepulchral suavity.

He had neither candles, nor oil for his lamps; and the fire-light was beginning to fail. He was glad of an excuse to quit the table, and busied himself kindling up the blaze with fresh sticks, while Christina and Job finished their repast. She joined him presently on the hearth; and, Job having gone to bed, the young woman and the old man sat there and talked till she had thawed his heart-springs and broken his pride.

“What is there about you that affects me so?” he said. “How other days come back to me! My wife, my daughter, all I have loved, all I have lost, — you suffocate me with the memories of them!” And he clutched his bosom, gasping for breath.

“I do not talk of these things,” answered Christina.

“It is your spirit: your atmosphere is filled with them. They press upon me and around me, — a cloud of witnesses! What is it?” he said.

“It is the day of judgment which has come to your soul,” she responded solemnly. “Do you not see Martin with the rest?”

He bent over the hearth, and nervously pushed together the falling brands.

“I have had a dozen patients in this house at a time,” he spoke up suddenly. “I were occupied from morning till night; a proud and happy man. Now not even my son is

left me. Shouldn't you think I would have some dark hours?"

"I should think you would wish to die!" she exclaimed.

"Die? die?" He shuddered. "But I am not prepared!"

"Few who die are prepared. Was Martin prepared?"

Again he stirred the fire with aguish hands; and again, after a pause, he attempted to turn the conversation.

"A dozen patients at a time. I were famous for my treatment of rheumatic complaints. I had this house built for a hospital. It is very large, you see. But I am all alone in it now!"

"Not quite. Do not any longer consider Job as no more than a dumb beast, doctor. If you have no mercy on him, how can you expect God to have mercy on you? In the sight of Heaven, he is as good as you or I, and may be a great deal better. One thing is certain: he has not the blood of a fellow-creature on his hands."

He rolled his eyes up at her quickly. "Who has? You — you cannot say I have."

"Poor old man!" she said, "it is time for us to understand each other. I do not accuse you; but I know all."

He sat crouching over the fire, mute, paralyzed, as if he had heard the stroke of doom.

"Fear nothing from me," she continued, with deep pity in her tones. "I am your sister. I have come, not to harm you, but to save."

He fell upon his knees, and lifted up his poor old hands imploringly.

“Have mercy on me! — have mercy!”

“Oh, I will, as I, too, hope for mercy!” she said with a tenderness and a radiance, even as an angel might have looked and spoken. “I will bless you, and not hurt you. The grave in the woods has been opened; and the grave in your heart must also be opened, or else you can never know peace.”

“The grave!” he articulated, with a terrified inquiry in his face.

“Heaven guided me to it for your good. Shut up in your heart, the dreadful secret gnaws like the undying worm. You must give it to me.”

“I did not kill him! — I did not!”

“I know you did not willingly; and yet, in the eyes of the world, it would be murder. And you feel the stain of murder on your soul, — as I have felt it on mine!” her voice suddenly sinking.

“You! — you have felt it?” eagerly uttered the culprit.

“And all the while,” she added, “I would have given my life for the life I destroyed!”

“Is it true?” he cried, selfishly grasping at a fellowship in guilt.

“True, or else I should not be here,” she sadly answered; “else I should still be in the world where I was, shallow-hearted and frivolous as any. I am an exile, but not from

God. Come," she said with unfathomable tenderness, "put your tired head on my lap, as if you were a child, and I your mother, and tell me all."

"It is that treasure that has been my ruin!"

"I know it well. And it may prove the ruin of more of us yet: it certainly will, if we seek it selfishly, or for base ends. You wanted it for your pride."

"I were very ambitious. Great wealth and a great name, they were my idols, and they have lost me my soul!" he said with a wail of anguish.

"Heaven have mercy on you!" prayed Christina.

"There is in heaven no mercy for me!"

"What! have the angels less love than I? Has God less than the angels? Old man, I bend over you now with a bosom full of pity; with arms of charity large enough to clasp all the sins of the world! And is Christ less than I?"

"Save me, — stay with me, — do not leave me again!" he pleaded wildly, clinging to her, on his knees. "I never heard such words from human lips: I shall never again. Help me, or I am lost!"

She laid her hand on his head, soothing him as if he were indeed an erring, repentant child, and she a forgiving mother. And so she encouraged him to speak of Martin.

"He were a beautiful boy, and I might have loved him; but to love a poorhouse-boy went against my pride. I were very proud," the old man continued, with something like the ghost of a smile. "I wanted to keep up the illusion that I

were a rich man. I could not have servants ; but I could have a slave. I — I confess I made a slave of Martin.”

“ Christ,” said Christina with deep, tremulous fervor, “ is on the side of the lowly. Just so sure as we set ourselves above the least of his little ones, we separate ourselves from him. He who makes a slave of a fellow-creature severs the divine bond of brotherhood, the umbilical cord of love which unites each soul with the great life-giving Source of all souls. It is not the slave that is cut off, but the tyrant. He gives himself over to pride and selfishness, the father and mother of all bad passions. Ah, you knew not what you did, old man ! You have been more unfortunate than you supposed.”

“ Fifteen years of hope deferred, — think of that, before you condemn me !” whined the wretch. “ Fifteen years of seeking for that treasure, — it had almost made me mad ! I confess I vented my disappointments on Martin. I beat him ; yes, I beat him often. I used to shut him up without any supper, and leave him all night. One morning, I found him dead.”

“ And you the cause !”

“ But I did not intend his death, — no, no ! And it were a terrible shock when I found him stiff and cold !”

Christina moaned as if the deed and the remorse were her own.

“ Oh ! why did you not then call in your neighbors, and say, ‘ Behold the child I have punished : he has died ’ ?”

“ There were marks where I had beaten him : I could not

make them disappear. There were traces of suffering, — of starvation: I could not hide them. I feared exposure; I dreaded investigation; I feared more for my pride than for my life. People would have pointed at me, and said, ‘Child-murderer!’ so I buried him in the woods.”

“And your own soul with him!” said Christina; “when only confession and repentance could have brought you peace.”

“Peace! — I have never known peace! I have been haunted by horror and remorse. I thought I would atone for what I did to Martin by getting another boy, and being kind to him. I brought Job here. But I had lost possession of myself: a devil has seemed to have me!”

“Many devils have had you, poor old man! To-night we begin to cast them out. To-night God lifts the curse.”

“By your hand, — angel!” he broke forth with sobs and tears. “Be my guide, my guardian. Tell me what to do!”

“In the first place, be kind to Job; and, when prejudices against the poorhouse arise, reflect that you may yet be there yourself!”

“I — with all that treasure!”

“The closer you cling to that, the poorer you will always be. You must give it up. If there is a treasure, it is not for men, but for humanity.”

“It is hard, after all these years. I cannot sign away my claims! I cannot give up my riches!”

Christina rose impatiently.

“Sordid wretch! are you so incorrigible? Have I labored with you in vain?”

“You have come here, then, to beguile me of my treasure!” cried the doctor; “to frighten me into compliance! But I will not be frightened: I will not sign.”

Quietly Christina put on her bonnet and shawl, and was about to quit the house. He ran after her, and threw himself at her feet.

“Don’t go! Pardon my childishness: I am very childish. Stay: I will do any thing you wish.”

She looked down at him a moment, half in pity, and half in disdain of his terrified servility: then with a sigh, as if the resolution to depart had been a relief to her, she removed again her bonnet and shawl, and resumed her seat by the hearth, he cringing at her side.

XXII.

MAD BIDDIKIN'S RIDE.

FORTUNE is to certain marriageable ladies what a molasses-eup is to flies ; and Elphaz Pelt, Esq., consoling himself for the loss of Luey by retaining her dowry, looked about, and saw with a grim smile at least a score of young women ready to rush into his arms and the fine new house he was building.

But Elphaz was circumspect ; Elphaz was nice ; and gradually narrowing the eircle of his observation, like a wheeling bird of prey, he fixed his eagle eye, and pounced on the Pinworth cottage.

Metaphorically speaking. He did not exactly swoop down the chimney, nor dash through a window ; nor is it to be understood that he had swapped off his two very distinct organs of vision for one prime aquiline orb. On the contrary, he walked in regularly every Sunday night by the front-door, in his finest plumage ; polished his beak with a silk handkerchief ; gave a claw to Sophy, and a claw to her mother ; perched himself between that amiable pair of doves for the

evening ; and found his oblique dual opties just the thing for the occasion.

“Takes a cross-eyed man to court two women at once,” said Mad Biddikin ; bitterly, for reasons.

It was some time before it was known which of the ladies was the lawyer's choice. September decided the question. Pelt proposed to Sophy : Sophy accepted Pelt. At which, society held up all its hands ; one of which was elinched and shaken.

The fist was young Biddikin's. He had courted Sophy himself all summer, and been secretly favored ; when Pelt stepped in, and he was turned out : Sophy, lured by lucre, transferring her affections to a man nearly twice his age, and not half as good-looking.

The turbulent Biddikin blood boiled at this perfidy. But he blamed Sophy less than he did her mother, by whom she had been over-persuaded ; and Pelt, by whom she had been purchased. Against these two his vengeance burned. He had a scene with Mrs. Pinworth in the street, — very scandalous. He stood and blackguarded Elphaz as he went in and out of his office. In short, he was fast becoming a nuisance which the squire particularly desired to have abated ; and his sharp eyes consulted each other on the subject, while he waited his chance.

It so happened, that the same evening on which the elder Biddikin went through the terrible ordeal of discovery and confession also brought a crisis in the junior's fortunes.

Colonel Bannington had taken advantage of the fine weather to visit the village ; and Mad, who accompanied him, had experienced the sting of seeing dash by him, as he slowly wheeled the chair through the street, a smart buggy, containing a pair of laughing lovers. It was Elphaz and Sophy.

“What’s the matter ?” demanded the invalid ; for Mad had halted involuntarily, all ablaze.

“He’d rather be pulling Pelt’s nose than pushing your chair,” laughed the tavern-keeper.

Mad, galled as never before by his mean occupation, which was thrown into humiliating contrast by the gay style in which Sophy was riding out, crushed an oath between his teeth, and moved on.

Everybody stopped to speak with the colonel, who was in so sociable a mood, that the sun had set before he thought of the homeward journey. Then he remembered the evening dews, and ordered a rapid retreat. Mad sullenly took his time to ascend the long grade, his volcanic soul ready at any moment to belch fire.

“Seems to me you are growing deused lazy,” said the colonel.

“Seems to me you are growing deused sassy !” Mad answered, and stopped.

It took the colonel an instant to realize the supreme insolence of the retort. Then, slowly twisting himself round in his chair, he struck at Mad with his cane ; which was seized quickly, wrenched from his hand, splintered, and flung upon the roadside.

“ Look out how you raise eane with me, you old limp-legs ! ” And Mad sat down on a stone, and laughed.

They were on an unfrequented road, at a distance from any house. It was fast growing dark. The evening was damp and chill. The invalid stormed and threatened.

“ Better keep quiet there, you wheelbarrow-full of corruption ! or you'll get spilt over,” Mad warned him.

The colonel remembered how he had suffered from the vengeance of one man. He did not like to fall into the hands of another with so murderous a disposition as Mad manifested. He accordingly arranged his muffler, strained his keen eyes to peer into the dusk, and kept silent, waiting for succor.

Unfortunately, in the first ebullition of his wrath, he discharged the offender from his service ; for which Mad mockingly thanked him, saying that he was “ tired of being a hoss.” And now, when, shivering in the dark and cold till he felt the chill striking to his vitals, he humbled himself to inquire how much longer he was to be kept exposed there, the answer came jeeringly back, —

“ Don't ask me : it's none of my business. I'm out of a situation ; and I'm going to set here till somebody comes along and hires me.”

“ I'll give you a job,” said the colonel.

“ You'll give somebody a job to carry you to your grave, you tub of wickedness ! Look out,” muttered Mad, “ that you don't hurry up your funeral-cakes by striking me again ! ”

The invalid pushed his chin out of his muffler, and breathed quick, fierce breaths, for a minute, with clinched teeth. He wished he had his pistols with him.

“ I'll give you a dollar to take me home ; and let that end it.”

“ Bid higher'n that, you old huckster ! You are in a bad place, right in the road there, where wagons'll be running over ye. Though maybe there won't be any wagons passing, and you may have to stay till morning, — you bowled-down ten-pin ! ”

“ Two dollars ! ” chokingly said the colonel, appalled by the prospect.

“ Two dollars is cussed little for a man you've struck with a cane. The law'll give me more'n that.” And Mad began to whistle.

Darker still ; clouds rising, and shutting out the stars. No vehicle coming.

“ Five dollars,” — the words tasted like gall to the helpless, enraged man, — “ and square accounts.”

“ Five dollars won't square accounts. I'm to have a crack at you to make us even, you broken-bladed jack-knife ! Ah ! won't it feel good to get hold of your sack of bones, and shake it a little ! Grind your hatchet-face sharper'n 'tis now in the sand here ! Now, do you know what I'm waiting for ? ”

The colonel had no longer a doubt but it was the villain's intention to delay until it was dark enough, and then quietly murder him. He didn't want to be murdered. Although

by no means a coward, he felt an impotent and selfish clinging to life, wretched as life had become.

"Say, don't you think you've lived about long enough, you crippled old sinner?" the assassin continued. "There's Guy waiting for your shoes. He'll marry Lucy Arlyn as soon as you're out of the way: then your money'll go! Five dollars to take you home? Wonder what they'd give to have you sent to your long home!"

The colonel then began to call for help.

"Look a here! just you dry up! shut down on that arrangement mighty quick!" said Mad, starting to his feet. "My fingers are aching to get hold o' your wind-pipe. You never'll scream again if they do!"

"By the gods! I can't stay here," cried the colonel furiously, prepared to grapple and die game. "I'll call; and lay a hand on me if you dare!" He did not shout, however, but pulled a bank-note from his pocket, and made Mad a last offer. "Ten dollars to take me home. Yes or no; and speak quick!"

"Agreed," said Mad, laughing as he pocketed the note, although it was too dark to ascertain its value; and, laying hold of the chair, he pushed it a few rods, then halted.

"Go on, go on!" vociferated the colonel: "you've got your pay."

"Yes: but I ain't working by the week now; I'm working by the job. No time was set to have it finished; and I can afford to be all day to-morrow about it."

After resting a while, he went on a little farther with exasperating deliberation, and halted again.

“ You haven’t give me any chance for supper yet,” said he. “ I guess now I’ll leave you while I go and get some.”

It was in vain that Bannington reminded him of the agreement.

“ I’ll keep my word, colonel. Dead or alive, I’ll wheel ye home. I’ll come baek and wheel ye a little farther after supper ; then I can finish the job easy in the morning.” And Mad marched away, heedless of threats, and disappeared in the darkness.

Nothing was left the invalid but to shout for help with his feeble lungs, which were soon quite exhausted by the exertion. Mad, in the mean time, returned by a circuitous route through the fields, and erept under the fence, where he could just see the dim outline of the colonel in the darkness, and enjoy his swearing.

At length the sound of wheels was heard, then the tramp of a trotting horse, then voices. Very gay the voices were ; but they were like swords to the soul of young Biddikin. Sophy and Elphaz were returning from their drive.

The colonel had been left exactly in the middle of the road ; and Mad hoped that he would get run over, and that all — particularly Pelt — would get broken necks.

The colonel screamed to avert the danger, and got himself out of the track by turning a wheel with his hand. The horse, hearing the noise, and seeing a mysterious object moving

by the road, dashed aside, and ran directly into the fence behind which lay Madison.

“What’s that? Who’s there?” cried Elphaz.

“Pelt!” returned the colonel. “Come here!”

“Bannington! — that you?”

Pelt went to his client; and Mad lay and chucked while Bannington told his story, and the two consulted.

“You’d better have followed my advice, and got rid of the scoundrel a month ago,” said Elphaz. “According to your own account, I don’t see how the law can take hold of him. He didn’t force you to give him the money?”

“No,” admitted the client.

“Nor agree to take you home to-night? And you had discharged him previously?”

“That’s so. But you’ll find some trap for him, Pelt, or you are no lawyer. Think it up at your leisure. But get me home now the first thing: I’m half dead.”

“I’ll go and get Aaron.”

“No, no! Don’t you leave me a minute. Wheel me yourself: ’tain’t far.”

“It’s half a mile at least! And here is Sophy.”

“Sophy be d——! Isn’t a man’s life of any consequence?”

Pelt was in great perplexity. He didn’t like the job at all; yet he dared not offend his client. After a consultation with Sophy, who agreed to drive the horse, he concluded to go before with the chair.

It was a dismal road ; and they had hardly got started, when Sophy uttered a scream.

“ What’s the matter ? ” cried Elphaz.

“ ’Sh ! ” whispered Mad. “ It’s me ! ”

Pelt left the chair, and started to come back ; when Sophy hastily cried, —

“ ’Tain’t any thing. I — thought I was going to tip over.”

“ All right now ? ” said Elphaz.

“ Yes : I — guess so ! ” — in an uncertain voice.

“ Come along, then.” And Pelt returned to the colonel ; while Mad softly climbed into the buggy, and took a seat by Sophy’s side.

“ Mad ! you mustn’t ! ” she whispered.

He answered by clasping her waist. He was wildly hilarious. He kissed her savagely ; and still she did not dare, or did not wish, to scream.

“ Did you speak ? ” said Elphaz.

“ No : I — I was talking to the horse,” replied the virtuous maiden. “ Now go ! — do go, Mad ! ”

“ I shall go mad if you marry him ! Do you think I’ll let you, and not tell him something you wouldn’t like to have me tell ? ”

“ O Mad ! I don’t mean to marry him : I only go with him to please mother. You mustn’t turn against me. Oh, if you should ! ”

Mad had taken the reins. He drove very slow, making the most of his interview, and terrifying Sophy by his violence. Pelt called to her to keep nearer the chair.

“ Ask him how he likes his job,” said Mad. She hesitated. “ If you won't, I will.”

“ No, don't !” she whispered ; adding, in sweet accents, “ How do you like your job, Mr. Pelt ? ”

“ Oh ! very well,” muttered Elphaz.

“ Tell him, maybe the colonel would like to hire him by the week, in my place.”

“ Perhaps Colonel Bannington would like to employ you in Madison's place,” said the reluctant maiden.

“ He'll employ me — to punish that rascal !” growled Pelt, toiling at the chair.

Mad could scarce restrain his savage merriment. He stopped the horse, and held Sophy, and whispered frantic things to her. Then, when Pelt grew anxious, and called to her to drive on, Mad urged the animal forward with headlong recklessness, resolved to run down both Pelt and Bannington.

“ Ho ! hollo !” shouted Pelt ; “ what in thunder !” —

“ I didn't see you,” faltered Sophy.

“ You broke my shoulder,” scolded the lawyer. “ Hold him, now, till I get on a little piece ; and don't drive so like Jehu again.”

“ Ho is awful angry !” whispered Sophy. “ Now, Mad, do behave yourself !”

“ I will !” said Mad, crouching in the fore part of the buggy. “ You'll see some bully fun !” And, reaching over the dash-board, he pricked the nag with his knife.

The animal jumped, and was on Pelt's heels again in an instant. A volley of oaths and yells proclaimed the success of Mad's experiment.

"I couldn't hold him in!" cried Sophy.

"Murder!" ejaculated Elphaz. "He trod right on my foot! and he has almost killed the colonel! What the deuse is the matter with him?"

"Tie him to the fence!" snarled the invalid. "Another such blow would dislocate my neck."

"Whoa, bonny; whoa!" said Elphaz, leading the beast to the roadside. "Oh, my foot! I believe he has smashed it! Whoa, — *ho!* — WHOA!" raising his voice to a shriek, as, by another leap of the horse, he was knocked against the wall, and jammed. "What in the old Harry, Sophy!" —

"He acts dreadfully!" said Sophy. "Something must be biting his heels."

"He has finished me!" groaned Elphaz. "I never shall step on that leg again! Oh, my knee!"

"Hurt ye much?" said Sophy sympathetically.

Pelt made no reply, but twisted one of the reins round a stake in the wall, and, groaning and limping, walked about the buggy to discover the cause of the animal's unruliness. The impatience of the colonel did not give him time to ferret out Mad, who lay in ambush, half covered by Sophy's skirts, and ready at any moment to dash down his rival, and leap over him, in case of discovery. Sophy, in constant terror of

some such catastrophe, entreated Elphaz to leave her where she was, and take the invalid home; and drew a long breath of relief when he consented.

“ Now you *must* go, Mad ! You are getting me into the terriblest serape that ever was ! ”

“ Ain't it rich ? ” chuckled Mad, tickled to the heart's core. “ He's doing the job I've been paid ten dollars for; and now I'm going to have a ride at his expense. ”

“ O Mad ! you mustn't ! you can't ! ”

But, the next minute, the wall was heard tumbling down.

“ Scream ! scream ! ” whispered Mad, springing into the buggy after accomplishing this little feat and freeing the rein from the stake.

“ O-w-w ! o-w-w ! ” shrieked Sophy. “ Mr. P-e-l-t ! ”

“ What is it ? ” roared Pelt in the distance.

“ He has pulled the wall down, and I can't hold him ! ” she replied by Mad's dictation.

Elphaz came running with all his might; but Mad had already got the buggy headed in the other direction.

“ Oh ! quick, quick ! ” screamed Sophy.

“ Stop him ! ” breathlessly shouted the lawyer.

“ I can't ! ”

“ Turn him into the fence ! ”

“ He won't turn ! Oh, I shall be killed ! ”

Pelt forgot his hurts, and ran as never lawyer ran before; but Mad was down again at the dash-board with his knife, which he used discreetly, regulating the horse's speed in a

manner to keep Pelt trotting after them at the distance of a rod or two. If he grew discouraged, and lost breath, Mad slacked up a little. If he started on again, in the hope of catching the buggy by a strenuous effort, he was suffered almost to reach it; then the horse was once more spurred into a gallop, and he was left gasping and wheezing, with aching lungs, far back in the darkness. It was Mad's intention to play with his distress till the last moment, and take him as far from the colonel as possible. And all this while Sophy did not cease to scream, and to implore Elphaz to rescue her from the fate that threatened. But there is a limit to human endurance; and finally Pelt gave up the chase in utter exhaustion and despair.

"This is fancy sport, Sophy! Hear him blow! And the colonel — oh, ho!" laughed Mad convulsively.

"Do leave me now! You've had fun enough!" entreated Sophy.

"No, not by a jug-full! The hoss is running away, you know. Scream, keep screaming!"

And, seating himself comfortably at her side, Mad plied the whip, and reined up the woodland road, bent on a jubilant night's ride.

XXIII.

THE NIGHT ENCOUNTER.



HAVING parted from Christina, Guy sat that evening on a roadside wall, and watched the ebbing sea of sunset fire, till of the crimson foam Venus was born, interpreting anew the old myth, — a soft-eyed infant star, with the crescent moon for a cradle.

Shadow and dewy coolness filled all the valley, and hung upon the purple mountain-slopes. It seemed as if the pensiveness of Deity had fallen upon the earth and upon man. Guy bared his head to the oncoming night; while the moon descended behind the western peaks like a horn of white flame, and the young star followed, and clouds began to rise like vast clotted masses of darkness stretching over the world.

Long he sat abstracted, powerful emotions agitating him as he reviewed the experience of the afternoon. It had been to him, in many respects, a sacred experience. Surprises and wonders had marked the few hours he had spent with Christina. The discovery of the child's corpse was an astonishing and awful manifestation of spiritual power. The washing of

his feet, and the kisses of the seeress, appeared to him mystic symbols of humility, of consecration, and of celestial love, pure from earthly fire. Even the finding of the watch he regarded as by no means the result of accident, but of design superior to accident, — a simple lesson teaching much: how the minutest circumstances of life are often, if not always, shaped by mysterious agencies; nay, how even the action of the elements, and of the brute creatures of the earth, may be controlled for our benefit by those magnetic threads of Providence which run through nature and the hearts of men, string good and evil together like many-colored beads, and bind in exact orbits the wildest comets of chance.

The soul of the young man, swelling and throbbing with these thoughts, put to itself the stern question: "Why not, since these things are so, surrender myself entirely to these influences, and accept the holy mission to which I am called?" He shuddered with awe, and yet with secret joy, as he remembered how unequivocally it had been promised by invisible intelligences, through inspired lips, that he should become a savior of men.

Just then, by no volition of his own as it seemed, but by an impulse imparted to him from on high, he turned his face upwards, and beheld a strange appearance in the heavens. A broad space of the sky was clear of clouds; in the midst of which burned the golden nails of the great Cross, as it were on the bosom of God.

Up to this moment he had been utterly unconscious of

every thing around him. The chilliness, the deepening darkness, the shrill song of the field-cricket, the gathering and breaking of the clouds, had been alike unnoticed. This long and intense abstraction of his thoughts from all outward objects enhanced the effect of what he considered a portentous spectacle. Often as he had gazed on the sacred symbol which glitters in the constellation of the Swan, it had never before impressed him as it did now. The canopy of the sky seemed rent asunder to reveal it. He was seated — could it be by chance? — in an attitude to view it in its natural upright position. No other important group of stars was anywhere visible; but there, like a stupendous picture in a frame of cloud, hung the sublime emblem of Christ's suffering and death, and of our faith and salvation.

No marvel, that, to one who was inclined to see mystical meanings in every thing, the apparition should have seemed to possess a significance of the most solemn character. But how interpret it? Did it prefigure to him his own heaven-ordained mission to mankind? With rapture and with worship he gazed, hoping, trembling, pleading for divine guidance, till his eyes grew dim, and suddenly the clouds closed again, and the cross was hidden.

Guy then got down from the wall, and set out to walk homewards. Home was to him where Luey was. Often, during the afternoon, he had thought of her with unaccountable uneasiness of mind. His trouble increased as he proceeded on his way. He was presently to meet her; and what account

should he render of that day's doings? How would she regard those things which appeared to him so momentous and so pure? Ought he to tell her all? Ought he to tell her any thing? Had she been sitting alone in her chamber all the afternoon? and could she listen with equanimity to the story of his adventures with Christina?

He was walking near the brookside, through the woods, his way dimly lighted by the heavens, now cloudless, but obscured by tree-tops, through which dripped the starlight here and there in golden rain, like that drizzled into Danaë's lap through her prison roof. The brook sang its ever-pensive song in its lonesome wanderings. The glow-worm (rarely seen) slowly opened its little lantern under the bushy bank. No other light or sound diverted his meditations, until a vehicle came rattling towards him, and a strong ray of light penetrated the dark woods. Two men appeared to be rapidly looking for something by the roadside. As they approached, Guy recognized one of his father's horses and his father's carryall; Aaron driving, and Squire Elphaz Pelt bearing aloft a lantern.

They stopped, and inquired if he had seen a horse running with a buggy and a young woman, or whether he had observed the wrecks of any such objects in the road.

Guy said he had heard one or two vehicles pass when he had been sitting on a wall; but he could give no description of them.

"It's queer!" said Elphaz. "My horse passed this way;

and he must have been going so fast, you couldn't have helped noticing him."

"How did he get away?" asked Guy.

"That rascally young Biddikin left your father in the street after dark, where I came within an inch of driving straight over him. I suppose that put the old scratch into the beast. He acted skittish after it; and, as I was getting the old gentleman home, he pulled the wall down I had hitched him to, and ran with Sophy."

"Now I recollect," said Guy, "there must have been more than one person in the wagon that passed me; for I heard voices. Your horse may have dashed into the woods below here, if he came this way at all. Give me the lantern, and let me see if I can find any fresh tracks."

Elphaz dismounted from the carryall, and they looked together along the road.

"Hoofs and wheels have been this way not long since," said Guy; "but a running horse would throw up more dirt than any of these prints show."

"That's so: they don't look like the tracks we saw back here a piece," replied Elphaz.

"The corks cut up the gravel right smart at first," observed Aaron; "but it has looked to me all along as if the critter was slackening his pace."

"Hark! — what's that?" said Guy.

The light of the lantern flashed into the woods, and fell upon an extraordinary object near the brook.

“It moves!” whispered Elphaz.

“It is a woman!” said Guy.

She had at first appeared lying on the ground; but now, as if alarmed by the noise and light, she rose, and attempted to run.

“It’s Sophy!” ejaculated Elphaz. “Sophy!” he called, springing after her.

The hollow woods rang with the wild cry; but the fugitive heeded it only to quicken her pace. Suddenly she fell.

“She has been flung from the buggy, and her brain has been injured,” suggested Guy, hastening to the lawyer’s side.

They reached the spot where she was. She sat on the ground, leaning against a log which had probably occasioned her fall. She made no further attempt to escape. Guy laid hold of her gently, bending over her, and asking if she was hurt; little guessing how she had been hurt, or by whom.

She made no answer, but appeared to be arranging her hair; when Pelt anxiously advanced the lantern to her face. Even before the glare of light fell upon that pallid, despairing countenance, a chill of astonishment and terror had shot to Guy’s soul.

“Good laws!” exclaimed Elphaz: “it ain’t Sophy!” — stooping, the lantern dangling from his hand. “Lucy Arlyn!”

“What does this mean? how came you here?” hurriedly demanded Guy.

"I am not hurt. I ran,—I don't know why," said Lucy with a bewildered air. "Have you been looking for me long?"

"We have not been looking for you. How came you here? What ails you, Lucy?"

"Nothing,—nothing at all. Who were you looking for?"

"Your cousin Sophy. She has been run away with," answered Guy, trembling with undefined apprehension.

"Come along," said Aaron to Elphaz. "They understand each other, and don't want any of our help."

The wagon went its way, the lantern disappeared, and Guy and Lucy were left alone in the darkness of the woods.

The unhappy girl, dragging herself homeward from her visit to the cascades, had sunk down in a trance of misery and physical exhaustion near the spot where she was discovered. But she was now sufficiently aroused to perceive all the embarrassment of her situation. She had resolved in her soul, that, if ever Guy saw her again, he should not know from her lips what she had that afternoon witnessed; and how to account to him for her present condition she could not contrive. In vain she assumed an air of cheerfulness, and took his arm, assuring him that she was well, and able to walk. He questioned her at first tenderly, but at length impatiently. Her answers were incoherent and constrained.

"How long have you been here?"

"I don't know. I was tired, and sat down. I think I must have fallen asleep."

“Why did you attempt to get away from me?”

“I — did not — know you — at first,” faltered Lucy; which was perhaps true.

“Still you thought we were looking for you.”

“I knew by what I heard that you were looking for some one. I was ashamed of having made trouble, and I thought I might get home without being seen.”

Her replies were becoming more natural and satisfactory than at first. Still the strangeness of her manner betrayed too plainly that she had suffered some unusual stroke, on the subject of which she was persistently silent.

“Very well!” he said bitterly. “Treat me as a stranger; conceal from me your motives; leave your conduct a mystery. No doubt I have deserved it.”

“What a woman suffers, what a woman in my condition must suffer, any moment when she pauses to think, will always be a mystery to any one but a woman,” answered Lucy.

The words fell like fiery coals on his heart.

“I have done every thing for you I could, — all you would let me do. What more can I do?”

“Be kind to me!” murmured Lucy in faint accents, full of helpless pain and entreaty.

“Am I not kind? But your strange conduct tortures me beyond endurance. This lying out in the woods at night is like the act of an insane person; and, when I require to know the cause of your being here, you equivocate, and hint

darkly of sufferings of which you will not tell me any thing frankly. Are you jealous again?"

"I shall not be jealous any more. I have been cured of jealousy forever!"

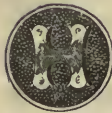
"Before Heaven, I swear I have not been untrue to you!" Guy continued impetuously. "If you would only believe me! — if you would only trust me! But you won't. Nothing I can say or do will convince you of the truth. I can endure any thing but this concealment and despondency, these sighs and tears which drive me mad."

"I will not trouble you with them any more," said Luey.

"There is nothing," — he seemed too much absorbed in his own feelings to heed how his cruel words crushed her, — "nothing I would not sacrifice for your happiness. But all in vain. I cannot make you happy!"

She made no answer, and he said no more. They walked to Jehiel's house in silence. Perhaps Guy was not the least miserable of the two. His sufferings were fiery and keen, while hers had settled into a dull ache, — a cold, curdling sorrow. At the door he relented; love and pity softening a heart which could be as tender at one moment as it was flinty at another. But her reserve repelled him: and she went up alone to her wretched room, unutterably desolate; while he parted from her as he had never done before, gnashing his teeth, — a spectacle to the calm stars, and to the angels that look down with sad commiseration at the perverse ways of men.

XXIV.

ABNER TAKES NOTES.

AVING scoured the country roads in the vain search for a vehicle dashed to pieces, and a young lady's mangled remains, Elphaz parted from Aaron, and hastened to inform Mrs. Pinworth of the mysterious occurrence.

He found the runaway horse quietly standing at the gate, and Sophy waiting for him in the parlor. She flew to meet him with her mouth full of lies and kisses. Where had he been? How glad she was to see him! What a fright she had had! And wasn't it strange that she should have got home before him!

"Very strange!" murmured Pelt, looking puzzled with one eye, and suspicious with the other.

"He carried me clear round by the East Street, down the Craggs Road, and home by the South Street," chattered Sophy. "And don't you think, before he got to the village, he was just as manageable as could be!—and I drove him right up here, and hitched him, without any trouble at all! Wasn't it funny?"

“Rather funny!” said Elphaz, believing there was treachery somewhere. He examined the horse, and found a brier attached to his tail. Sophy was astonished when told of it, and declared that it accounted for the animal’s singular behavior. Wisely resolved to wait for more evidence before expressing an opinion, the lawyer preserved the brier and a rather grim silence; bade Sophy a cool good-night; then drove the horse half round the village in order to take him by a back way to the tavern-stables, and avoid getting laughed at by the boys about the bar-room.

One of the dreaded youths was Mad Biddikin, in high spirits after his adventure; drinking, and treating his companions with the generosity and jocularly of one who was conscious of spending money received for a job which he had left a ridiculously duped rival to perform. He went to bed that night in a room which whirled round and round in a dizzy vortex; and awoke the next morning with a headache, penniless.

Being out of employment and out of funds, the filial youth bethought him to pay a visit to his father.

It was in the afternoon. Doctor Biddikin was with Job in the upper story of the house, renovating the sleeping-rooms, when the unmistakable footsteps were heard ascending the stairs.

“Madison! — my son Madison!” The delighted senior hastily wiped his fingers, and ran to hug in his puny arms the junior, who grinned like a lusty young giant over the little old man’s shoulder.

“What’s the row here?” said Mad; glancing at the scene of his operations.

Biddikin, clinging to his son with unusual emotion, could not speak for a moment.

“I am exterminating the parasites of these bedsteads: you know what I mean, — the *Cimex lectularius*,” he said, instinctively disguising in elegant and learned phrase the vulgarity of his occupation. “I am preparing these rooms for company. We are going to dig for the money in earnest in a week or two; and this house is to be the headquarters of the mediums.”

“Bully for you, old Beeswax!” cried the admiring junior. “Who furnishes funds?”

“Can’t you address your father a little more respectfully? And do abandon the use of that outlandish slang!” said the doctor, returning to a bottle of liquid a feather which he had been using about the apertures and creases of the bedsteads. “Good times are coming; and let us see if we can’t be worthy of our name and station, my son!” — with a smirk of the old Biddikin pride. “The funds will be forthcoming. We have had the sight of money; haven’t we, Job.

“Y-a-a-s!” simpered Job: “lots of money!”

“You have come home to stay, my son, haven’t you?” added the old man with another gush of affection. “Kiss me! — give me a kiss, Madison!”

Mad scowled, but concluded to grant the boon, from mercenary motives.

“Is the young woman with the devil in her going to be here?”

“That woman is an angel! — an angel, my son!” repeated the doctor, trembling with the fervor of his feelings. “A beautiful spirit! — a wonderful being! She were here last night; and she has blessed my soul! — she has blessed my soul!” — spoken with quivering lips, while tears started in the old man’s eyes.

“If she’s to be here, there’ll be fun,” said Mad. “I’ll stay.”

“I am acting under her directions. She has promised to attend to my interests: I shall trust every thing to her. Quit your degrading occupation, and come home, Maddie. There is no place like home, and nobody like a father!” said the old man, carried away by his parental feelings. “Come, Maddie, my boy! sit in my lap as you used to!” — pulling the strapping youth down upon his lank knees, and hugging him, greatly to the edification of Job.

“Mad’s come home!” said the crow, perching in the open window. “Laugh, Jack!” And the impish creature fluttered, and bobbed his head, and repeated his wild “Ha! ha!” as if he had a human sense of the ludicrous scene.

Like Gulliver in the arms of a Lilliputian, Mad sat and grinned, putting his stout arm about the other’s skinny neck, and insinuating the financial question which was uppermost in his mind.

“After money, the first thing!” said Biddikin reproach-

fully. "Is this your love for your—ah! you sit rather hard, my son!"

"Give me five dollars!" laughed Mad, tightening his embrace.

"Ah! oh! Maddie, my son! let up a little! I'd forgotten you are no longer a child! Ah!"—a groan of pain.

"Five dollars, old boy!"

"Not a cent, you ingrate! you—oh! you crush me!"

"Affectionate son; ain't I, Job?" cried Mad.

"Y-a-a-s!" said Job.

"O Madison!" squeaked the sufferer, "you're murdering me! I haven't a cent of money, or I'd give it you, ungrateful as you are!"

"I'll see whether you've got money. Give me that bed-cord, Job!"

"Don't you, Job! I'll scream! Murd"—

The senior's utterance was impeded by the junior, who found it necessary to embrace the paternal neck and pat the paternal head somewhat rudely, in order, as he expressed it, to make him "dry up." Job, in the mean time, albeit unwillingly, handed the bed-cord; with which Mad proceeded to bind his captive hand and foot, and lash him to the chair.

"You burglar! you assassin!" cried the struggling old man, as his son rifled his pockets. "Not a cent of money shall you have; not one cent!"

"Then here goes!" Mad lifted the chair, with his parent

in it, to the window-sill. "Tell me where your money is, or God have mercy on your soul!"

"Unnatural child! will you kill me? I have no money: Job knows I haven't! Have I, Job?"

"N-o-o-o!" drawled the terrified Job.

Mad balanced the chair in the window long enough to give the old man ample time for consideration: then, twisting the loose end of the cord about a bed-post, he lowered his screaming victim from the sill, and left him suspended betwixt heaven and earth, with his face towards the street, and his back against the clapboards.

"Hang there, you last year's bird's-nest!" he cried from the easement above.

"Where's Biddikin?" said the crow. "Laugh, Jack! Ha! ha!" and after flying about the gibbet, cawing exultantly, a minute or two, he ended by alighting on the bald crown of the doctor.

"'Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted fiend!'" said the old man, resorting to Shakspeare for words strong enough to express his sense of injury, — "'more hideous, when thou showest thee in a child, than the sea-serpent!'" Madison, dror me up!"

"Tell me where your eash is!" said the inexorable youth. Getting no response, he took Job to the window to witness the picturesque spectacle. "Fun; ain't it, Job?"

"Y-a-a-s!" gasped the little wretch, pale with fear.

"'Sharper than a serpent's tooth it is to have a thankless

child ! ” remarked the gibbeted doctor. “ I’ll stay here, and show to the world what a son I have, and how he treats me ! ”

“ You’ll do wonders ! ” Mad retorted. “ God made you to ride toads to water. — Come, Job, let’s have a game of euchre. ” And, taking a pack of greasy cards from his pocket, he sat down on a bed-quilt, and commenced sorting them. He was initiating Job into the mystery of the bowers, occasionally putting his head out of the window to make a pleasant remark, when a buggy passed the gate.

“ For mercy’s sake, friend, help ! ” called the doctor.

The vehicle stopped, and the driver stared with amazement at the improvised gibbet, and the carrion-bird already alighted on the head of the victim.

“ What are you doing there, Doctor Biddikin ? ”

“ I have been robbed, — murdered, — hung out of my own window, — by my own son ! ”

The features of the young man in the buggy relaxed with a grin of cunning ; and, after scratching his head — a red one — for a minute, he took a note-book from his pocket, and began to write.

“ Don’t delay an instant ! ” cried the doctor, “ if you would save my life ! The rope has cut me in two ! I am nearly dead ! ”

The young man coolly continued to write.

“ Look here, Abner Roane ! ” suddenly shouted Mad, shaking his fist from the window : “ if you don’t want your cocoanut cracked, you better go about your business. ”

"I'm about my business," replied Abner. "He robbed you, did you say?"

"He tied me hand and foot, and then picked my pockets," said Biddikin in his gibbet. "Didn't he, Job?"

"Y-a-a-s!" piped a feeble voice, quickly stifled by a blow from Mad's back hand.

Abner carefully noted down the charges, laughing secretly to think how Pelt and the colonel would prize them. Mad seemed to suspect his intentions; for he came bounding down the stairs, and rushed out of the house.

"Do you want to lose that flaming red top-knot o' yourn?" showing his menacing fingers.

"Ain't particular about it," replied Abner, grinning still, but pale. Mad uttered a threat, which the other thought it judicious to write down. "Did you say my neck, or my back?" paring his pencil.

"I'll break your neck and your back too, if you don't" —

"Wait a minute: 'Neck and back too,'" Abner wrote. "Now proceed."

But Mad's attention had been suddenly diverted in another direction.

"Thank Heaven!" groaned Biddikin, "succor has come at last!"

Miss Lingham and her friend the philanthropist were approaching arm and arm on the roadside. Hearing a call for help, they looked up at the curious object hung out of the window.

“Brother Biddikin!” said Mr. Murk, his nose elevated, and his mouth wide open. “That must be the work of spirits; and a very remarkable manifestation! Don’t you think so, Sister Lingham?”

“Certingly!” said Sister Lingham.

“It’s the work of spirits!” Mad mockingly repeated; “and I was the medium!”

“Where’s Biddikin?” said the crow, mournfully, from his perch on the bald crown.

“Look at me!” cried the doctor; “then look at that hard-hearted son! I am suffering dreadful torments. But don’t take me down: leave me here as a monument. Let the world approach, and witness the spectacle. Let parents take warning by this outrage.”

Slowly Mr. Murk turned his fishy eyes from the monument to Mad, whom he contemplated with a sapient, satisfied nod.

“The young man is influenced by mischievous spirits; don’t you think so, Sister Lingham?”

“Certingly,” said Sister Lingham; while the philanthropist’s Swedenborgian arm confirmed the opinion.

“Yes, it’s spirits!” said Mad, also shaking his fist. “And look out they don’t influence me to knock off ten or a dozen superfluous inches of your nose.”

“Brother,” — Mr. Murk addressed the red-haired young man, — “as friends of humanity, I think we ought to make an effort to relieve our suffering brother.”

Upon which hint, Abner tied his horse, and went grinning to see what could be done.

"Don't try to dror me up; let me down!" cried the doctor. "If the rope ain't long enough, there's another."

This suggestion was followed; and Mr. Murk and Abner, leaning out of the chamber window, let the gibbet cautiously down.

"Where's Biddikin?" repeated the crow, balancing himself with his wings as the chair tipped in descending. "That's the talk!" he added, as Miss Lingham steadied it with her hands. And, never quitting his station, there he sat solemnly on the doctor's glistening scalp till Abner and Mr. Murk came from the chamber.

Mr. Murk proceeded, with Miss Lingham's assistance, to untie the knots; while Abner once more made use of his notebook.

"Haste!" said the doctor. "I am impatient to chastise that boy! You sor him strike me; didn't you, Job?"

"Y-a-a-s!" said Job, holding a dirty jack-of-spades in his hand.

"And choke me: didn't he choke me hard?"

"Y-a-a-s: orful!"

"You can take your oath; can't you, Job? And hasn't he done it often, — a hundred times?"

"Wait," said Abner, writing rapidly. "That's very important! A — hundred" —

“Look here!” cried Mad, striding fiercely towards Job. “Did I strike him? Dare you say I struck him?”

“N-o-o, I dasn’t!” said Job.

“Job, Job!” ejaculated Biddikin, “didn’t he strike me? Tell the truth, Job!”

“Y-a-a-s, he did,” said Job: “knocked yer head!”

“My life ain’t safe in his hands, you see, gentlemen! — Oh, you ingrate! you monster!”

And the doctor, as soon as he had one hand at liberty, clinched it, and made a dash at Mad, dragging the chair and plenty of loose rope after him.

“Let him come!” said Mad in a pugilistic attitude, setting his chin out tauntingly, and playing his fists at the old man’s face. “I’ve knocked him down many a time, fast as he could pick himself up.”

“How many times?” said Abner, looking over his pencil.

Pencil and note-book flew into the air at a stroke from Mad’s boot; who remarked, as Abner sprang to recover his property, that he was used to kicking foot-ball.

“Perhaps,” said the pallid Abner, “you would like to kick me. I want you all to witness it if he does.”

“Don’t you do it, Madison!” exclaimed the doctor. “He’ll take the lor of you. Don’t you!”

“If I should, ’twould be the last of him!” said Mad, with his foot drawn back. “There’d be nothing left but a grease-spot.”

“Never mind!” — Abner finished his writing with a trem-

bling hand. "It was an assault to kick my book. You all saw it. Besides," — he tapped his notes craftily, — "I've enough here to fix him!"

"He's been taking evidence!" ejaculated the doctor. "Madison, run for your life! He'll have you up for striking me!"

"And choking you!" grinned Abner; "and robbing you!"

"It's false!" retorted Biddikin. "It's a sheer fabrication. Go about your business!"

"It's my business to get him arrested on your complaint," said Abner, retreating.

"I've made no complaint!" The doctor compressed his lips firmly, stiffening his meagre neck. "How could he rob me? I had no money, — not a cent; had I, Job?"

"N-o-o!" said Job. "Felt in all your pockets: couldn't find none."

"He's my son; I can let him abuse me if I choose: shouldn't you say so, Mr. Murk?" cried the excited doctor. "Isn't it a pity father and son can't have a little altercation, but a lawyer must interfere? You contemptible" — and the fierce little man made a sally at Abner, who jumped into the buggy, shaking his note-book triumphantly, and drove away.

"Let us keep calm," said the philanthropic Murk with a dull smile. "All these things have their use, brother. The experience of being hung out of a window was necessary for

you. No doubt it has some very beautiful significance; don't you think so, sister?"

"Most certingly," said Miss Lingham with a sympathizing smile.

"The young man" — meaning Mad — "was only an agent. The other young man, whatever he may do, is only an agent. We cannot help what we do. The spirits know what is necessary. Evil is just as necessary as good is; and evil is no more evil than good is evil. Strictly speaking," — the philanthropist squinted sagaciously, — "there is no evil. Don't you say so, sister?" turning to Miss Lingham.

"That is comforting doctrine, truly!" remarked Doctor Biddikin, recovering his equanimity and his genteel manners. "But I — I'm not sure" — thumbs together — "but it would encourage vice."

"Do you know the difference between vice and virtue?" asked the sapient Murk. "They are the two poles of the same battery. If there was no vice, there could be no virtue. And as for vice being encouraged, what is necessary will be. See there! the wise Athenian indorses that!" — wagging his Socratic arm.

"Well, well!" cried Biddikin with airy affability, "it may be so: I'm not prepared to say. But walk in; for I suppose you have come to converse about affairs."

"Shall we go in?" Murk paused a moment, then wagged both hands. "Yes, the spirits say, 'Go in.'" And, giving Socrates to Miss Lingham, he escorted her into the house, following the doctor.

Mad rolled on the grass, playing with the crow, which perched, now on his wrist, and now on the sole of his upraised foot, and now picked his pockets for corn ; until Job brought the cards, and sat down by command to resume the game of euchre, — a three-handed game, as it proved ; Jack taking the first “ trick,” and flying with it to the top of the chimney.

XXV.

JUSTICE PELT AND THE PRISONER.

HE young man whipping his horse so smartly down the road is Abner, hastening with his note-book to rejoice the heart of Elphaz, and to earn the lasting gratitude of Colonel Bannington.

Luckily, Elphaz is a justice of the peace. Luckily, Aaron Burble is a constable. Before night, a warrant is out for the arrest of Madison. But the question arises, How to catch him? The rogue can run like a deer; while Aaron, though a man of mighty muscle, is not fleet of foot: and, after two days' unsuccessful endeavors to effect the capture, the question still remains to be solved.

The elder Biddikin is in great distress for his son's safety, and watches by day, and lies awake nights, and abuses the constable. But Mad thinks it fun to dodge an officer; and, trusting to his cunning and his heels, even ventures to show himself in the village whilst Aaron is looking for him on the mountain.

To enhance the sport, he addresses a note to Sophy, invit-

ing her to meet him at evening by the mill-pond. He drops it himself in the post-office. Mrs. Pinworth takes it out; recognizes the superscriber; opens it on the spot, and carries it straight, not to Sophy, but to Elphaz Pelt.

Not being in her daughter's confidence, how could the excellent woman know the danger of betraying one who held in his possession secrets, which, if he divulged them, might be fatal to Sophy's matrimonial prospects?

The lawyer looked grim. "Is she still in communication with that villain?" — both eyes sparkling, one at the letter, the other at the widow.

"My daughter," said the Pinworth relict with precise dignity, "has too much respect for herself, Squire Pelt! I wish you could have seen her indignation when she read that letter! She thought you ought to be made aware of his designs at once."

Elphaz had been cool towards Sophy since the night of the ride; but this maidenly proof of her fidelity to him revived his confidence and rekindled his ardor. His spirits rose as he re-read the letter and formed his plans.

Meanwhile the widow hastened to bring forward events which she had got considerably the start of in her narrative; and Sophy was made aware at the same moment of the existence of Mad's note, and of its delivery into his enemy's hands.

"O ma!" exclaimed the astonished and incensed young lady, "what a goose you are! Mad will think I did it; and he'll be the ruination of me!"

“Why, Sophy, I meant it all for the best! What can he do” —

“You’re a goose! and that’s all there is about it!” said the dove.

And they fell to pecking each other spitefully, until the eagle arrived; when straightway they began to coo softly, and the younger presented her amiable bill to the beak of the royal bird.

“A pleasant little billet-ducks you received this morning, Sophy.”

“That impudent letter, Mr. Pelt! I’ll teach him to write *me* such things!”

“You did well to send it to me, my dear.”

“To whom should I refer such things but to my protector?” And the dove nestled fondly in the eagle’s bosom.

His errand was to borrow a little of her plumage; namely, a bonnet and shawl. She could not refuse to lend them; but, as soon as he was gone, she hurriedly penned a billet to Mad, telling him what had occurred, excusing herself, and warning him not to come that evening to the pond-side. But how get the note to him? It was impossible; and, an hour after it was written, she burnt it in despair. Evening came, and Mad came with it to the pond-side. It was just at dusk. The pond was unruffled. Cool and still stood the trees in the twilight over the water; cool and still hang their images in the glassy liquid below. But the beauty of the evening had few charms for Mad’s heated brain. He saw a girlish form

walking by some bushes on the shore, and stole near enough to recognize Sophy's bonnet and shawl. He advanced quickly, uttered a gleeful laugh, and threw his arms affectionately about the waist of — Ann Maria Burble!

He was lifting her veil to kiss her; when out of the bushes stepped Aaron, and laid a hand on his shoulder, with a quiet — “I want you, young man.”

Mad was stunned for an instant. He looked at Aaron; he knew Ann Maria; he saw himself betrayed, a prisoner; but only for an instant.

“No, you don't!” he ejaculated, as with a sudden wrench he freed his shoulder. He made a lunge at the bushes. There he ran into the ambushed arms of Elphaz and Abner. Wheeling again, he dodged low, as Aaron swooped to catch him, fell, and flopped into the water like a fish.

He was an accomplished swimmer, and might quickly have crossed the pond, but that natation was impeded by a hand holding his coat-tail. As he struck boldly out, Aaron gently pulled him back. Then, slipping off his coat, he left it in the constable's hands, and made a headlong plunge. But it was diving under difficulties: for now Abner had him by the legs; and now Aaron had him by the nape of the neck; and now Elphaz whipped out of his pocket a cord to bind him. After a brief struggle, the valiant youth was conquered, and marched into the village with his hands tied behind him, swearing, and very wet.

After a night passed in a strong room of the town-house,

the prisoner was brought before Squire Pelt. The lawyer's office — styled a court-room on such occasions — was thronged by spectators; every loafer in the village pressing in to see the sport. In the midst of the coarse-featured group appeared the little doctor, trembling not only for his son's safety, perhaps, but also, it may be, thinking of himself standing there a prisoner, in more terrible peril.

The original charges against Mad, of cruelty to his father, and of threatening with violence those who interfered to protect the old man's life, were duly sworn to by Abner, and corroborated by Job and the reluctant doctor himself. To these were now added the more serious one of forcibly resisting an officer of the law. The old man could only groan, and shake his head, at the incontrovertible evidence. But the pettifogger who managed the defence whispered to him to be of good cheer: he had found a flaw in the warrant, which would quash the proceedings.

He rose to his feet, — a lantern-jawed individual, with rabbit's eyes and cunning-looking teeth, — and demanded in a shrill voice, —

“Who is Eliphaz Pelt?” He glanced round the room, and, fixing his eyes on the justice; repeated energetically, “Who is El-i-phaz Pelt?”

“It is the court whose name you are handling; and I advise you, Mr. Jinket, to mind what you are about,” said the justice.

“I think it can be shown, sir, that it is not your name, —

with all due respect to the court," replied Jinket. "It can be shown that you have heretofore written your name Elphaz; that it is painted on the shingle at the door, Elphaz; that you are everywhere known as Elphaz: whereas this instrument is signed by Eliphaz Pelt, and is consequently an illegal document. I therefore demand my client's immediate discharge; and hereby give notice of intention to institute immediate proceedings for the prosecution of parties for the false imprisonment of — my client," said Jinket, sitting down amid a general rustle of excitement caused by this eloquent speech.

All eyes turned on Pelt, who was fiery-red. The truth is, that the learned lawyer came from a low and ignorant family, and had grown up in the belief that his name was Elphaz; nor had he until recently stumbled on the name Eliphaz in Holy Writ, and adopted the biblical orthography. Hence his sensitiveness.

"I am not responsible for the blunder of a sign-painter," he answered, "nor for the stupidity of those that can't read writing. My name is Eliphaz in my commission; it was Eliphaz on the ticket that elected me to this office; and I guess" — riddling Jinket with sharp glances — "that settles the matter."

The pettifogger was silenced. Biddikin uttered a groan of despair. And now Mad, who up to this time had taken his friends' advice and held his peace, expressing his hatred

of Pelt merely by the murderous glare of his eyes and the menacing one-sided protrusion of his chin, broke silence.

“Who cares whether it’s El- or El-*lie*-phaz? He’ll *lie fast* enough, any way!”

“’Sh! ’sh!” whispered the frightened doctor. But the laughter of the bystanders encouraged the youth’s malevolent wit.

“The difference is all in his *i!* You see, his father and mother never was very partic’lar ’bout the eyes in their family!” Which direct allusion to Pelt’s obliquity of vision filled the room with an uproar of mirth.

“Constable, keep order!” shouted the justice angrily. “The prisoner is fined nine shillings for contempt of court.”

“Fine away, you little finger of Satan!” roared Mad, clinching his fist. “My opinion of you has always been that of a darned rascal.”

As the prisoner lost his temper, the justice regained his. And now the slight grammatical confusion which marred the beauty of this last speech afforded an opportunity to make a neat retort.

“Nobody doubts, sir, but all your opinions may be those of a profane rascal; but, for the contemptuous expression of them to this court, you are hereby fined five dollars in addition to your previous fine. And, owing to the aggravated circumstances of the case, I do not feel authorized to decide in the matter myself by letting you off with a light punish-

ment, as I could have wished ; but I am compelled," the magistrate continued with affected, ironical kindness, "reluctantly compelled, to bind you over."

The prisoner was accordingly held to answer the charges against him before a higher tribunal. After some discussion, his bail was fixed at three hundred dollars ; in default of which, he was committed to the county jail. Then all the evil fire in him blazed up. He declared with an oath that he would make Pelt look six ways for Sunday as soon as he could get at his eyes, and attempted to execute his menace on the spot : an act of violence which had no other effect than to tighten Aaron's hold on him, and to raise his bonds from three hundred dollars to six hundred. As responsible recognizances to that amount could not be easily obtained, — Doctor Biddikin's offer to bail his son being rejected amid general laughter, — nothing was left but for Madison to go to jail.

"Hurrah for jail, then !" he cried recklessly ; "but take care !" still threatening the magistrate with eye and fist and tongue as he was hurried away by the constable.

"It is manifest malice and injustice !" exclaimed the doctor, "that I, worth probably the largest fortune in the State, should be refused the privilege of bailing my son ! Don't you think so, Mr. Jinket ?"

Jinket showed his teeth with a grimace and nod, significant of mysterious resources of legal knowledge, but did not commit himself in words.

And now the doctor might have been seen parting with his son, embracing him with tears, and appealing pathetically to the crowd for bail, until the wagon came which was to convey the prisoner to his new lodgings in the stone edifice with iron-barred windows, nine long miles from his father's house.

XXVI.

ON THE CRAGS.



HE news that Christina had overcome the doctor's obstinacy, and brought him to terms, was now rallying those who were interested in revelations concerning the buried treasure. His house was thronged by influential spiritualists, anxious to commence mining operations. Plans were discussed, and lectures on the subject were delivered by Franklin, Bonaparte, and other illustrious invisibles, through the lips of persons still in the flesh.

From all this, however, Guy kept aloof, notwithstanding that he was officially notified of the organization of a society, called the "Order of Mount Ararat," of which he was chosen chief. He smiled at the doubtful honor conferred upon him, which he neither accepted nor declined. He waited for some decisive summons to action. And one day the summons came. It was from Christina.

A morning of unusual splendor dawned. It was now October, and the world was glorious in its autumnal dress. The mountains gleamed in gold and purple. The heaped and

massy foliage of the forests on their slopes kindled into billows of fire. Wherever a sumach grew by a wall, a flaming bush appeared. The russet boughs of the great oak, the magnificent yellow elm, the brilliant burning foliage of the soft maple, the rich orange tints of the sugar-maple, the gaudy scarlet and crimson plumes of woody cliffs mirrored in waters that slept like molten glass beneath them, — all these varieties of color glowed in the haze of the valley, and robed in more than Oriental pomp the farms, the roadsides, and the shores of ponds.

Up through the gorge of the cascades Guy went with his favorite hound. Above him hung the gorgeous awnings, whose majestic supporters were the numberless columns of the trees. Autumn had encamped with all her hosts among the mountains and valleys; but here it seemed the queen herself had pitched her tent over the musical and shining waterfalls. Under the luxurious fluttering drapery, among the tall and silent pillars, in the soft smoky light that filtered through the festooned and many-tinted canopy from the golden urn of the morning, the young man walked and mused.

On the brink of the misty cavern where his feet had been washed by the hands of the seeress, and wiped with the hairs of her head; at the grave of Martin, where he had witnessed so impressive a manifestation of her mediumship, — he recalled all the circumstances of that memorable afternoon; felt once more the presence of spiritual powers overshadowing him, and prayed to them for guidance in the hour which was now at hand.

He had observed that Ranger picked up something near the roots of a tree that overhung the cavern; but he had been too much absorbed by other thoughts to give heed to the occurrence. The dog still carried the thing in his mouth; and now he came and dropped it on Martin's grave. Guy took it up: it was a lady's glove. "It must be Christina's," he thought; and, putting it into his pocket, he commenced the ascent of the mountain.

He soon struck a well-known path, a sort of rude stairway worn in the steep side, among the roots and rocks. It wound upwards through a dense growth of hemlocks and birches, which became shorter and thinner as he proceeded; until, at the end of a half-hour's toilsome climbing, only a few scattered poplars and stunted pines remained, and he found himself on the bald and battered skull of the mountain.

He looked around. Wonderful at any time was the view from the summit, but surpassingly wonderful that calm October day. Range beyond range of mountains was visible on every side, as if the world were one tumultuous ocean, in the midst of which, like an island in the blue main, swelled the mountain on which he stood, with all its shaggy forests and wild rocks.

The valley could not be seen from his position; and, to obtain a view of it, he clambered over the ledges towards the cliff which fronted the village. As he advanced, he saw standing on a solitary crag a female figure. A narrow and perilous ridge led to that lonely peak. On each side were chasms

a hundred feet steep down. Ranger ran on before ; and, fearing lest a touch or a sudden start should cause the woman to lose her balance and footing, he shouted to call him back.

At the sound of his voice, she turned and beckoned. "Come!" rang her silver tones across the chasms. "There is room for two."

"But not for three. Go back, Ranger!"

Guy groped his way over the sharp edge of the crag, quickly, but cautiously ; climbed the jagged mass beyond, and gained a footing by her side.

"Who else but you, Christina, would have been perched up here alone?"

"Isn't it grand!" she said with a rapt smile. "One feels as the eagle feels, —

'Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ringed with the azure world!'

What a solemn thing it would be to take one step forward!
Look!"

She advanced her foot. He clasped her arm with a cry.

The precipice over which jutted the crag was broken into fangs and tusks immediately beneath them, on which a falling body would have first been dashed, and then tossed sheer from the cliff, down an almost perpendicular slant of mountain wall ; a distance so great, that the cataracts of stones, the stupendous pyramidal ruins which deluged its lower side, viewed from that height, appeared one crushed and crumbled mass at the foot of the cliff.

“A step,” — she smiled seriously, — “it would take one very, very far!”

“It would shoot your body down among the blocks of the ice-caves where we hunted the bear; and it would whirl your soul into infinity. One step!” repeated Guy. “And who knows, Christina, but that which we are about to take is just as momentous, and that we shall soon find ourselves flying over invisible precipices? The soul hath perils as the body hath.”

“Don’t I know it? Didn’t I once put, as I thought, my best foot forward, to tread on solid happiness? walking blindly, headlong, from one of those dreadful crags of life, — into awful vacancy a moment,” — Christina shuddered; “then, crash! I was shivered like an egg.”

“You fell — in love?” said Guy.

“I was — married!” said Christina with a spasm of pain.

“You! — married! But you never told me! Who was the happy man?”

“Happy? Do you think I could make a man happy?” she asked bitterly.

“Intensely happy, or intensely miserable. You have a fearful gift!” said Guy.

She smiled upon him strangely. “You shall know, some day.”

“Who, then, is your friend, the tall gentleman? Not your husband?”

“No!” exclaimed Christina. “Who *he* is you shall know soon. He will open that mysteriously silent mouth of his to-day. Well, how have you been?” And, without waiting for an answer, she continued; “I was ill after I saw you. That night with Doctor Biddikin was too much for me.”

“That’s what I am anxious to hear about. You broke his shell?”

“Yes; though I’m afraid it wasn’t of much use. I had to pour out my life to float the wreck of his heart, and get it off the terrible sand-bars; but it sinks again the moment I withdraw my sympathy.”

She told her story. “One thing is gained, though, — the treasure.”

“When we get it,” said Guy with a troubled smile.

“I have seen it just as distinctly as I saw Martin in his grave; and it can just as easily be found, — if we have faith.”

“I should be the last man to lack faith, after what I have seen. I have come to-day to do the bidding of the powers that are so much greater and wiser than we. Yet I have misgivings.”

“Of what? That we shall fail? Then it will be failure in a noble cause. That’s better than success in a mean one. And the experience — I am greedy of experience!” she cried, with a wild fascination in her face. “To live, to act, to feel, to burn with life, and not to be a vegetable, Guy Bannington!”

He caught her enthusiasm ; and for some minutes they stood together, rapt and silent, regarding the sky, the crags, and the magically colored picture of the valley outspread before them, with its villages, forests, farms, and golden slopes.

“ What,” then said Christina, “ is the meaning of Satan’s taking Jesus up into a high mountain, and showing him the kingdoms of the world ? ”

“ At this moment I was thinking of it ! ” exclaimed Guy. “ Satan is the spirit of selfishness, which whispered its evil suggestion even to the Son of man. From the height of his divine power, he saw what earthly dominions might be gained by using that power for earthly ends.”

“ Are you and I proof against such temptation ? ” asked Christina.

Her altered voice surprised him. Her countenance was not less changed. He was about to speak ; when, with one of her impressive sibylline gestures, she motioned him to retreat. He clambered back over the rocks. She followed, stepping lightly and swiftly between the chasms like a somnambule, or a creature with wings. He watched her breathlessly until she reached his side.

“ Go,” she then said. “ The company will be waiting. I have work to do. Give me your knife.”

She wandered along the verge of the cliff until she came to some bushes that grew in the fissures. There she knelt. He left her, and, returning towards the summit of the mountain, soon reached the scene of Doctor Biddikin’s money-digging.

A shaft forty feet in depth had been sunk in the solid rock. It was now a cistern. A pool of black water filled the Plutonic hole. Fragments of the old scaffolding floated on the shining surface. A portable pump had its nose in the seemingly bottomless pit. Around was the heaped litter of the excavations; and, not far off, a ruined hut. A few dwarfed spruces, quaintly overgrown with lichens, struggled here and there for life in the craggy soil. All was silence and desolation.* Not an insect, not a bird: only the mountain-wind blew over the dreary rocks.

Sheltered by a bank of splintered and pulverized stones, Guy sat musing as he gazed at the unfathomable blackness of the cavity. He saw the wretched ghosts of hopes drowned therein, — the old, saddening story of delusion and despair rehearsed before his eyes in that Stygian mirror, — and somewhat bitterly smiled as he thought of himself resuming a forlorn enterprise which had brought only ruin and ridicule to all who had engaged in it.

He gazed until the snaky eye of the pool seemed to glitter back at him with an infernal sort of fascination. He rose, and cast a stone at it. A sullen wink, as the plashing missile sunk; and the Cimmerian eye twinkled and leered, and settled again into its sinister, snaky stare.

Just then, Ranger barked; and, looking round, Guy saw looming up over the heap of excavations a stalwart nose, — the facial forerunner of Mr. Murk, the philanthropist. It was accompanied by the moony countenance and shaved forehead

of Miss Lingham, and by the plump round features of a black-haired woman of very singular appearance, — short, swarthy, adipose, astonishingly furbelowed, and barbarously jewelled.

“You know this sister, brother,” said Mr. Murk. The moony countenance smiled. “This other is also a well-beloved sister, — Mrs. John Smith, wife of Ex-Governor Smith.”

“Pocahontas,” thought Guy; almost fancying that some Indian princess stood before him.

“And this, sister,” — wagging the Swedenborgian arm at Guy, — “is our chief.”

Pocahontas penetrated the young man with her keen black eyes, and said impressively that she could have picked him out of ten thousand, as Joan of Arc, from among many, singled out her king.

Guy, who was fast growing to think that there was something remarkable about him, and to receive with gravity homage which would lately have excited his derision, answered, with becoming graciousness, that he was madam’s very humble servant.

“He who would be greatest among us must be our servant,” observed the philanthropist. “Do you see the beautiful significance, Sister Lingham? Ah! Sister Smith is under impression! She is a very powerful trance-medium, brother!”

After a few nervous starts, the ex-governor’s lady mounted the mound of stones and baked mud, and commenced an address. Her singular costume, her emphatic gestures, the

rolling of her rotund head and shoulders as she spoke, set the risible muscles to quivering under Guy's waistcoat. Her oratory was also of a style to titillate the diaphragm; resembling much her personal appearance in plumpness, swing, and emphasis.

But, though amused, Guy was forced to admire. By disdaining all artificial elegance of diction, and relying upon the coarse vernacular, which she shaped like sand into rude moulds for the flaming ore of her thought, she turned out wonderful sentences; as round and solid, and full of vitality, as herself. She pictured the condition of society, the misery, the vice, the disease; the few fattening in idleness, the many toiling and starving; the dishonesty of trade, which deals in deceptive fabrics and poisoned food; avarice and passion, not love and justice, ruling the actions of men and of nations; the tears and aching hearts of the comfortless; the dead churches and fossil religions; no practical Christianity anywhere; proclaiming that already these corrupt elements were beginning to dissolve, and to crystallize again, in new and beautiful forms, about the doctrines of spiritualism. She ended by affirming that the light which was to illumine the world had its focus on this mountain, and that the high priest of that light was this day to be ordained.

XXVII.

THE CONSECRATION.



URING this discourse, a goodly company had assembled, — friends and strangers, old men, young men, women ; a motley gathering of twenty or thirty persons. There glittered the intense eyes of the long-haired, long-bearded zealot ; there fluttered the Bloomer dress of the strong-minded woman ; there flapped the broad hat-brim of the ruddy-faced young travelling lecturer ; there glowed the broad, red, unctuous features of good Deacon Pitman ; there Doctor Biddikin smirked ; there Archy Brandle jerked ; and there shone the bland features of Christina's silent friend.

Mr. Murk now mounted the embankment, and proposed to give a brief history of the treasure.

The first settlers in this region found a company of Spaniards in possession of the mountain. Until within a few years, old men had been living who remembered the foreign adventurers. They had some huts, and a cave in the mountain-side. There they carried on some mysterious business, which

excited a thousand vague conjectures among the settlers. Nothing definite was known of it, however, for a year or two; when one of the strangers, who could speak a little English, made the acquaintance of a wood-chopper, who had been a sailor, and could speak a little Spanish.

“The wood-chopper’s name were Mather,” interpolated Doctor Biddikin. “He were the grandfather of Deacon Pitman.”

Murk proceeded. Through the medium of the two languages, the two communicated; and the Spaniard related that his friends were working a silver-mine up into the mountain from the western side. One evening he took Mather to visit it, and showed him by torch-light, far up in the rocks, a chamber completely filled with shining coin, of which he gave him a handful.

At this time, dissensions and feuds were raging among the miners; and it was probably on account of them that the friendly Spaniard had wished to take Mather into his confidence. Not long after, a terrible fight occurred, which broke up the company. Some were killed, and others were driven away; until, out of twenty, only three remained. One of these was Mather’s friend, who related to him that they were going to Spain to procure assistance, and that they had blocked up the mouth of the mine with rocks. At their departure, Mather was left to keep a watchful eye over the treasure, with the promise of a rich reward on their return. But they never returned; some disaster probably occurring to them on their voyage.

After waiting several years, the wood-chopper related what he knew to his neighbors. But, by this time, portions of the cliff had fallen, and concealed the entrance of the cave altogether, — “it being necessary,” Mr. Murk continued, “that all evidence of the truth of the tradition should be destroyed, in order that the treasure might be reserved for this great work.”

Even Mather’s testimony on the subject appears not to have been fully credited. He had spent the coins the Spaniard gave him, and had nothing to show for them but a red nose. He was fond of a glass, and those who acquitted him of telling a wilful falsehood attributed his story of the silver chamber to a dream of intoxication.

Deacon Pitman’s mother remembered hearing, when she was a little girl, her father, the old wood-chopper, talk about treasures in the mountain. But, even with the tradition in his own family, the deacon had never put faith in it, until, to his astonishment, he received a communication on the subject from the spirit of his grandfather.

Long since, however, Doctor Biddikin had come over the mountains from the east, had heard the tradition, had become convinced of its truth, and had purchased for a small sum that portion of the mountain which was considered worthless by those who were ignorant of the riches it contained. After expending a good deal of money in searching for the entrance to the mine, he consulted a person skilful in the use of divining-rods; and, under his direction, he commenced digging on this spot, hoping to sink a shaft straight to the treasure.

“ But failure was necessary,” continued Mr. Murk. “ And it was brought about rather curiously, as was recently shown by my own investigations with the rods, but more particularly by our illuminated Sister Christina. Standing on this bank, she was able to discern the treasure directly beneath her feet. It is consequently not more than three or four yards from the shaft, which appears to have been sunk expressly for our advantage; for you observe it will be easy, when the water is removed, to descend into it, and, commencing operations at the proper depth, open a door directly into the mine.

“ For some time,” he continued, “ the brethren have been ready to contribute material aid towards this movement. Only Brother Biddikin has stood a little in our way, as it was no doubt necessary he should; but, now that all things are ripe, our inspired Sister Christina has been employed as an instrument to induce him to yield his claims, in consideration of which he is to receive from the brotherhood a provision sufficient for his maintenance, and a tenth part of the treasure. I believe this is the correct statement, Brother Biddikin.”

“ I — I have consented,” said the old man, strongly agitated. “ I have worn out my health and broken my heart in the work; and now — I — it seems to me a hard case; but I give up, — I give up the treasure.”

He looked around for Christina, as if dependent on her for support in that trying moment; but she was nowhere to be seen: and, struggling with his emotions, he shrank away, an object of painful interest to the pitying spectators.

“It was at first advised by our spirit-guides,” resumed the philanthropist, “that six of the brethren should subscribe a thousand dollars each. But this plan has been modified at the suggestion of the brethren themselves; and it is now settled that each member of the order shall stand pledged to render such assistance in the work as may be required of him, — time, talents, or money, according to his circumstances and capabilities.”

He then read a declaration of the character and designs of the association; to which were appended the names of Moses Murk, secretary; Cephas Snow, Amos Pitman, Ralph Bid-dikin (the doctor), Sabina Smith (the governor's lady), Robert Green, and Augustus Haddow, directors; besides several private members.

Of the seven officers, all except the doctor and the philanthropist were persons of ample pecuniary resources, which were pledged in aid of the movement. A treasurer was yet to be chosen; and the chief who had been appointed by the spirits remained to be inaugurated.

“I now beg leave,” said Mr. Murk, “to introduce to the brothers and sisters a very distinguished brother, — the Hon. Cephas Snow, late member of Congress.”

Guy raised his eyebrows in mild astonishment; while Christina's tall friend smilingly lifted his hat from his high white forehead, and atoned for his long silence by a very neat speech.

He told an interesting story of his conversion to spiritual-

ism. He related experiences of public and private life which had long since convinced him that some such movement as was now organizing was required to regenerate society. He complimented the mountain very handsomely : here they were elevated above the world ; here they commanded a magnificent outlook upon the universe ; and here, he felt assured, the earth touched heaven with a kiss of peculiar magnetic unity. He was inclined to agree with his friend Mr. Murk in the opinion, that this mountain was one of the spiritual poles of the globe, and that in no other spot could invisible intelligences communicate so directly and freely with men. It was, in fact, the modern, moral Mt. Ararat ; and here, in the midst of the breaking-up of the great deeps of human society which had been prophesied, the ark of human redemption was to rest.

Enthusiastic applause followed this graceful speech. The rocks were echoing, when Archy leaped upon the mound.

“Hear ye, hear ye the word of the Lord !” he shouted. “Why stand ye here idle ?” And he proceeded with an energetic exhortation to commence at once the great work, speaking with a fluency and force which surprised all who knew him ; until, in the middle of a sentence, the inspiration suddenly left him, and he came out of his trance, staring ludicrously a moment ; then got quickly down from his elevation, looking excessively ashamed.

The contrast between the congressman’s polished manner and the youth’s involuntary outburst caused some to smile.

But it had the effect of making every one feel that here was no distinction of persons ; that all were brothers and sisters, united by one purpose and one love. And now an old man mounted the rocks.

“ Brother Haddow, one of the directors,” Mr. Murk explained.

His hair was thin and white. His beard fell like shining wool upon his breast. An expression of exceeding benevolence illumined his beautiful clear eyes and almost transparent face. The tones of his voice were tremulous and sweet with love ; and, as he spoke, benediction from the heavens seemed to rain upon all hearts.

“ I am old, my children ; but I bless God that I have lived to see this day. For threescore years I have observed the sorrows and sins of the world, and mourned for them, and pleaded the cause of my Master, and called to my brothers and sisters to love one another. But only a few have heard me ; and the evil in the world seemed so great, that I was beginning to despair, when this new light dawned wherein we rejoice. The angels of heaven have come to our aid. The bonds of the oppressed shall be broken. The bitter vials of strife and envy shall be poured out no more. Wounds shall heal. Hard hearts shall melt like wax. My children, I know that this is to be ; for the spirits of the just have proclaimed it, and they will not deceive.

“ And now,” the old patriarch continued, “ who will join us in our work ? Let not the fickle or the faithless come

near. Let not the proud come, or he who is ashamed to own the drunkard, the convict, and the woman lost in sin, as his brother and his sister. But come, all ye who love. Such only are worthy to use the treasure which is stored in these rocks for humanity's sake. I shall not be with you long; but receive the counsel of one who has learned by experience how much more blessed is charity than selfishness. Work together in harmony. Forgive one another's faults. Be faithful to your trust. Amen."

These words, uttered with singular fervor and winning sweetness, ran like fire from heart to heart. And now the patriarch descended to a hollow of the rocks where Guy stood bowed with thought, and took him by the hand, and led him to the summit of the mound.

"The Holy Spirit has descended upon us!" said the old man. "Son, be obedient!"

Guy bared his head to the October sunlight. The mountain-wind played in his hair. With a deep sigh, and a reverential smile, he glanced upwards; then, with thrilling earnestness and solemnity in his slow, quivering tones, he said, —

"I should be strangely unreasonable, I should be strangely ungrateful, if I were not obedient. I know these heavenly influences. I am indebted to them for unspeakable blessings. They have opened depths of thought and joy within me too sacred to name. They have made real to me miracles, immortality, and the fiery Pentecost. I will obey them."

He ended, his features still flooded with the sunlight, and

with something finer than the sunlight, — reverence, rapture, love ; and all who looked upon him could see written in his countenance the history of days and nights of struggle between him and his soul, before ever he could stand in that place ; and all hearts went out to him.

“ Kneel, my son,” said the old man ; and he knelt on the stones. A book, called the Book of the Covenant, was opened before him. A pen was put in his hand, and he wrote his name. Then around him was formed a circle of all such as the spirit moved, who laid their hands upon him as he knelt with his head bowed down ; and the old man pronounced the words of the consecration, and in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, proclaimed him the chief of the order.

Up to this time, Christina had not been seen : but now she glided among the mediums ; and, after the hands which were upon Guy had been withdrawn, — while all yet stood around, and his head was still bowed, — she stooped, and laid upon him a crown.

There was a movement, a murmur of amazement ; and Guy rose to his feet. He knew not what she had done to him ; but he saw grief and alarm in the faces around him, and he was conscious of sharp pains piercing his temples. Then he put up his hand, and knew the crown of thorns.

“ This from you ? ” he said reproachfully, turning his sorrowful eyes on Christina.

“Oh, not from *me!*” she answered. “God knows I would not! And have I not suffered?”

And she showed her bleeding hands.

Then the old man lifted up his voice, and prayed.

XXVIII.

ESTRANGEMENT: WINTER.

THAT evening, Luey sat by her window, pale and changed. The wounds at which her spirit bled had left her body weak. Since the day when she went alone into the forest, she had not left her room. Only from her window could she see the glory of October. And there for hours she sat alone, watching the woods by day; and there for hours she sat alone, listening to the brook by night.

She saw little of Guy now. When, after the evening of their cruel parting at the door, he came again with a yearning and repentant heart to atone for his harshness to one to whom he owed all tenderness, he found her ill; but she smiled upon him faintly, and uttered no reproach, and forgave him sweetly when he accused himself.

“Only be patient with me now; bear with me a little while,” she whispered: and he never forgot the look she gave him, — the sunlight of affection quivering on the fountain of tears.

She had never been more lovely, and he had never loved

her more, than now. He longed to open to her his full heart, and win from her the cause of her sorrow. But that secret she kept carefully locked in her own bosom : it chilled their intercourse, and repelled him from her.

That evening she had left the window, and taken up some sewing ; when her door was opened, and Guy stood in the room. She did not spring to meet him as in other days, but smiled a silent welcome. He looked at her long, without speaking. His countenance was unspeakably tender. Around his brow shone something like a halo. All the lines of his mouth seemed tremulous with love. After his recent consecration and sad crowning, there he stood, reconciled to suffering and shame, if suffering and shame must come ; raised sublimely above pride and fear, his whole being breathing love.

After welcoming him, Luey resumed her work, on which she tried to fix her eyes and thoughts. But the very atmosphere of him, the intangible, invisible something which his spirit shed, penetrated her with a melting power. It stole into her bosom like flowers and perfumes, in the midst of which the thought that he loved another pierced her treacherously, like the muffled spear of Bacchus wounding through its wreath of leaves.

He came and stood beside her, and looked at her work. It was an infant's dress, which she was daintily embroidering. The sight of it moved him deeply : for hitherto the image of their child had been to him altogether vague and ideal ; but the little garment was sternly literal.

“ Can *you* realize it, Lucy ? ”

“ It was a good while before I could make it seem that these dear little things would ever be worn by a baby of ours ; and half the time now I am working in a dream. ”

She spoke in the cheerful tone she endeavored always to use in his presence, but which, in spite of her, betrayed the underflowing sadness.

“ And it is a sorrow to you ! ”

“ It is a sorrow, ” — she answered softly after a moment’s hesitation, — “ and it is a great comfort. I kiss the dear things for *its* sake ! ” and she pressed the dress impulsively to her lips.

“ God bless the babe ! and God bless with rich blessings its mother ! ” he said with solemn fervor. “ I do believe that a happy future awaits us. Only let us have faith, and be strong. ”

His words sank deep in her heart. They seemed sincere : surely they were warm with affection. She was waiting for more ; her soul was hungering for more ; when something dropped from the handkerchief he drew from his coat. He stooped somewhat hastily to pick it up.

“ Is it a keepsake you are so careful of ? ” she asked with an uncertain smile.

He saw that he had made a mistake in appearing at all disturbed ; and he answered carelessly, —

“ It’s a glove I found. I am looking for the owner. ”

“ Don’t you know who the owner of it is ? ” she inquired very quietly, but with a look full of meaning.

“Not positively. I don’t know but it may be yours,” — tossing it into her lap.

“Mine!” exclaimed Lucy, surprised. “Where did you find it?”

The truth began to dawn upon him. He parried her question with another.

“Is it yours?”

Lucy had not been out since her visit to the cascades. Then she had worn that glove. She had not missed it, not having needed it since. She thought, she felt certain, that she must have dropped it in her wild and dizzy flight from the brink of the cavern; perhaps within a few yards of the spot where she had made the discovery which blighted her life. Then her secret was betrayed! Controlling her agitation as well as she could, she returned the glove, saying in a forced voice, —

“I hope you’ll find the owner.”

“Lucy!” he said, clasping her wrist, “it is your glove!”

Her heart swelled and her cheek blanched; but she neither confessed nor denied. He held her still; he made her look in his face; he demanded earnestly, —

“Why did you never tell me this?”

“Tell you — what?”

“That you went to the cascades, saw me there, and broke your poor foolish heart.”

Concealment was at an end. The grief, the despair, which she had stifled long, and meant to keep forever hid from him, broke forth.

He took her in his arms ; he endeavored to soothe her ; in vain. He placed her on the sofa, and walked to and fro in great agitation. Her trance in the woods, her unaccountably strange conduct, her illness, her patient suffering,—he comprehended all. Nor could he blame her now ; nor could he hope to exculpate himself ; while the memory of her wrongs and resignation, of her buried sorrow, and of the tender green grass of her sweet cheerfulness growing on that grave, filled him with admiration of her character, together with a wonderful, yearning, pitying love.

But now she had recovered once more the control of herself ; and stanching her tears, and pushing back her hair from her brow and cheeks, she sat, fixedly regarding him as he spoke.

“ If you had only told me this, all would have been well ; all might have been explained.”

“ If *I* had told *you* ? ” she cried. “ But what if *you* had told *me* ? If *I* concealed something, what did *you* conceal ? You kept from me your perfidy ; while I kept from you only my knowledge of it ! ”

“ My perfidy ! ” murmured Guy. “ O Luey ! ” But he was dumb : he knew he could not make her understand.

“ I don’t accuse you ; and, but for the accident of that glove, you would never have heard a word on the subject from my lips. But now I will speak,” she continued with energy of soul. “ You have kissed that woman : I saw you kiss each other. I thought the sight would kill me : I hoped it would.

I hoped, I prayed, I might be removed out of the way of your happiness."

"Mereiful Heaven! Lucy!" in a voice of amazement he interrupted her, "Hear me a moment. I shall not attempt to overcome your prejudices by explaining my relations with that woman: I shall not assert and re-assert the spiritual nature of those relations. But, in proof of my fidelity, let me tell you what was in my heart when I came to-night."

He explained: she listened, gazing at him with intent eyes, while he offered that which it would seem almost insane in her now not to accept. But her woman's nature was roused; and, when he had ended, she answered at once, —

"No! If poverty did not seem sweet to you for my sake, when you loved me, it would be too bitter now."

"Oh, you will not believe me!" he exclaimed. "I only regret that I did not, in the first place, make you my wife before the world. It would have saved you so much! — and it would have saved me the shame of thinking how basely I have acted. I suppose my father will disinherit me now, at any rate: I deserve it. And what if he does? What is wealth? God will take care of us if we will be his children. Long enough I have skulked and deceived. Now I perceive the beauty of holiness, the greatness of faith, the glory of a life of love, and of suffering for love's sake."

She thought that she, too, had suffered for love's sake; and hot thoughts swelled up.

"You pity me," she said after a struggle. "So you

come and propose what you do. But I will not have your pity now I have lost your love. You have told me a hundred times that there is no true marriage without the perfect union of hearts. Without your undivided love, no outward recognition of me as your wife can make me happy. What is the world's scorn? I have felt it; but it is nothing—nothing to the loss— Guy, Guy! go from me!" she cried, hiding her face in her hands.

"When we understand each other, when you are calm, when you have accepted my offer," he soothingly said.

"I will accept it on one condition." And she regarded him with proud eyes flashing through her tears.

"Name it."

"That you see that woman no more; that you separate yourself from that fanatical company altogether."

"It is impossible," Guy answered with a sad shake of the head; "for I have this day bound myself to them more strongly than ever."

She sank down a moment under this blow.

"And you will not give her up for me?" she asked at length with a strangely subdued and level look and tone.

"I cannot pledge myself not to see her; but"—

"Enough! You cannot be my husband, and give your love and kisses to another." Her voice was little more than a whisper; but all the passion of her soul was in it. "I am not your doll, your slave: I am your equal. I am worthy of your entire love and confidence, or of nothing. Cling to

that woman, if you will. When you find yourself duped and ruined, you will remember me ; you will think of the heart that loved you better than life.' Then you can do me justice, or you can do my memory justice, before the world. You will be just to our babe, I am sure !''

The pathos of this last appeal overcame him ; indeed, his very soul was moved. But he could not yield.

Perhaps she had assumed her high and firm position in the hope that he would accede to it. And when all had been said, and he still refused, she knew that all was over ; she knew that the long dark night of her life had come.

The night of the year came with it. The sunset of the year, which is October, faded fast. November's bleak and tempestuous twilight set in ; and the icy and pallid winter midnight drew on.

A dreary period of lonesomeness and heart-ache to Lucy. After hope long deferred, she had given up her father as dead. Long since her friends had forgotten her. And now she was deserted even by him for whom she had sacrificed all.

Not that Guy had ceased to love her ; not that he visited her now no more. But the open rupture to which their differences came at last could not be healed. High-spirited and heroic, she could suffer, she could die ; but she could not beg for affection, nor accept a part of his heart, nor enjoy his coming when she knew that he had been with Christina, and would return to her again.

Few and formal his visits became. His interest was else-

where. Miners were on the mountain. The ruined hut had been repaired; the old shaft had been re-opened; and Guy, in his executive capacity, had made acquaintance with that hitherto unprofitable bore. And now was heard the sound of sharpening the drills at the forge, and once more the mountain resounded with the thunder of the blast. Among all the prominent members of the association great enthusiasm prevailed. Money was abundant, poured in as priming to the pump which was expected soon to pour out again inexhaustible golden supplies. Except in the coldest of the weather, the work of the miners went on; penetrating inch by inch, slowly and laboriously, the stubbornest azoic stone. Daily it was anticipated that the drills would strike through, or that the blasts would blow through, into the subterranean chambers of coin; during which time the Biddikin mansion glowed with warmth, and flowed with plenty, so that the doctor grew fat, and not even poor little Job went hungry.

With the workmen at the summit, or with the men and women of the association who filled with new magnetic life the rooms of the old house, Guy spent his days and nights. Here, in the half-spiritual yet intensely human elements of a nondescript society, he found something which his soul craved. He was much with Christina. Whether or not he loved her, she was fast becoming necessary to him. When he went uncomforted from Lucy, the smiles, the radiance, the spiritual gifts, of the seeress were his consolation. Thus unconsciously Lucy drove him to her rival. And she was for-

gotten; she was left alone, sewing, with what sorrows and what solace few can guess, her little baby-things.

She was not weak. She did not utterly despair. To Jehiel and his wife, who did all they could to comfort and encourage her, she was thankful; but she seemed scarcely to heed or to need them. She was pre-occupied with her own whirling thoughts. In vain for her the wonderful phenomena of winter were disclosed. When the vast white plains were beautiful to behold in their spotless purity; when the far hills were clad in creamy mantles, embroidered with brown woods, and softly tinged with blue; when the brows of the cliffs were veiled with icicles like inverted spears; when the rocky hillsides were hidden under cataracts of ice, fixed, noiseless, and solitary; when the woods stood white and still like forests of frostwork; and when the wild snow-storms came,—she looked out listlessly, with vague surprise, and with many a dull pang of memory; then turned again to her work, in the night which was upon her, sewing, with much sorrow and small solace, her little baby-things.

But now when sorrow was deepest, and now when the night was darkest, there broke a sudden light; not the glad morning beam, which was distant still, but a star of exceeding beauty and holiness, dropping from heaven its tender melting fire into the depths of the young mother's soul. It was the star of maternal love.

XXIX.

ARCHY MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE,
AND MAKES A NEW ONE.



HE birds were singing again in the old orchard ; and Archy Brandle stood by the work-bench in his little shop, thoughtfully holding a cog-wheel, when his mother looked in.

“ Can’t you make it go, my son ? ” said the smiling widow.

“ Can’t help thinking about *her!* ” starting from his reverie. “ Ain’t it too bad ? ”

“ In one sense ’tis, and in one sense it’s good enough for her. If she had only married you, now ” —

“ Oh ! don’t mention that, ma ; ’tain’t no use ! ” And, with tears in his eyes, the genius pretended to study his cog-wheel.

The widow, who had never forgiven Luey for rejecting her son, regarded him with a tender, aggrieved look.

“ After all, it was a narrer escape for you, Archy ! She couldn’t a’ been a very good girl : she never was good enough for you. I must say, though,” she reluctantly added, “ I pity her from the bottom of my heart.”

“I wonder if the’ ain’t suthin’ I can make for her,” said Archy. “D’ye ’spose she’s got a cradle?”

“Mos’ likely, by this time. But the idee” — Mrs. Brandle smiled discouragingly — “of your making a cradle for her baby!”

“I might git up one” — Archy kindled with the conception — “to go by clock-work; warranted to rock a baby to sleep by once winding up. I’ve a good notion!”

“That’s an idee, my son. But, then, you wouldn’t like to go and offer her a cradle, would you, now! What would she think?”

“Of course!” said the genius, blushing. “I only jest mentioned it. I wish folks would stop talking about her so: she’s better’n half of ’em, anyway, I know. But I did think better of Guy Bannington, after he got to be a spiritualist.”

“Wal, it’s with spirit’alists as ’tis with other denominations: they ain’t all on ’em jest what they should be, no more’n other folks. There’s always wolves to creep into a fold that’s open to ’em; ’specially a fold that hain’t got its walls built up yit. But come, my son, I want you to go of an errant to the village now: we’ll talk when ye come back.”

“Ye in a hurry?” said Archy. “For I’d like to wait and have a hunk of that gingerbread, when it’s done: I’m re’l kind o’ faint.”

“Why ’tain’t in the ov’r yit; and I can’t make it up till ye fetch some molasses. I thought there was a plenty; but, come to tip up the jug, I can’t git enough to ketch a good smart fly.”

Archy rolled down his sleeves, put on his coat, and, taking the jug from his mother's hand, started for the village.

The molasses was soon got, and he set out to return. It was one of the sweetest days in early spring; a summer-like warmth swimming and glimmering in the soft air. To shorten the distance, he crossed the fields, carrying the jug. Jehiel's house was in sight; and glancing at it furtively, thinking of Lucy, he forgot that his mother and the gingerbread were waiting. An indescribable flood of feelings rushed over him, which seemed somehow blended with the singing of the robins. For the robins return not alone when the winter is past; but with them return thoughts of other days, warm-breasted, winged thoughts, singing of the loves and joys and losses with which the scents and sounds of spring-time are forever associated.

Already the infant herbage was pushing its myriad tiny fingers through the dead mother's threadbare vest. It appeared freshest and greenest where the snow had just melted away; like the lurking hopes which put forth from never-dying roots, and clothe the heart with blessings, even when the cold white mask of the winter of despair is upon it. A comparison which Archy might have perceived, but that his mind was never cunning in analogies, and that now he had something far less poetical to attend to.

A flock of sheep was nibbling here and there; when out from among them walked one of their number, advanced deliberately a few paces towards him, and stopped. Archy

stopped also, with trepidation; glancing around him for a weapon, and muttering, —

“ Oh, mighty ! it’s ’Hiel’s pet lamb ! ” Once a favorite play-fellow, now an enemy ; with which he had had many a merry tussle before he (the lamb) had got horns, and he (Archy) had found his butting dangerous.

The cosset was now a stout ram ; and what had been taught him in sport he was inclined to practise in earnest. Archy, who had fought more than one battle with him, and come to grief, stood tremblingly facing him, until the animal stamped with his fore-foot, showing signs of rage ; while the flock stood looking on wonderingly, like ladies at a tournament.

Archy’s heart failed him, and he set out to run ; but his legs were no match for Billy’s, which followed swiftly. Accordingly he halted, and placed his hope in dodging. When within a few yards of him, the cosset paused an instant, drew in his nose, threw down his horns to a stiff level with his neck, then darted forward like a forked thunderbolt. Instinctively, with the agility which terror inspired, the genius leaped aside, and the thunderbolt rushed past him, butting empty space.

“ Help, help ! ” he screamed, appalled by the tremendous strength of the full-grown animal, “ Help ! — murder ! ”

Billy turned, backed off a few steps, and came again. This time he grazed the legs of Archy, who seized his woolly tail with one hand, clinging to the jug with the other, and calling vociferously, —

“ Murder ! MURDER ! Oh ! will the spirits help ? ”

The spirits evidently would not, or could not, under the circumstances. Archy stumbled, losing his hold ; a part of the caudal wool coming away in his hand. He had scarcely regained his balance, when Billy wheeled, and came again with a wicked leer. Too late to dodge, he retreated backwards, holding the jug before him, his only defence. Thunderbolt struck jug,—a dull crash ; and thunderbolt, boy, and jug went down miscellaneously together.

A moment after, Archy scrambled to his feet. Dismay was in his countenance, and the handle of the jug in his hand. At a little distance was Billy, blinded, bathed in molasses, and flirting his head with snuffs and snorts of rage.

The genius cast a heart-sick glance at the shattered jug and its spattered contents ; then took to his heels, never stopping to look back until he had tumbled himself over a wall. Then he rallied, and contemplated himself ruefully, and bemoaned the molasses, and wept as he thought of his mother and the gingerbread. What should he do ? The brook was pouring not far below, the sound of which suggested needful ablutions ; and he wandered down towards it disconsolately.

“ Oh, my gracious ! ” he said, standing on a stone by a clump of willows, and regarding himself again as he bent over the water. “ Ain’t I a sight ! ”

He had abandoned his hat on the battle-field : but he still elung to the jug-handle tenaciously ; and an equally useless portion of the jug’s contents elung to him, smearing his hands, and variegating his light-colored fustian trousers with

enormous streaks; while his cassimere jacket, once blue as the sea, but long since faded, showed its "gray and melancholy waist" studded with an archipelago of molasses islands.

"Ain't I a sight?" he repeated with solemn depth of emphasis, glancing cautiously around him. "I wouldn't have any one see me now for all" —

His voice died in his throat, leaving his mouth wide open with consternation, as his eye fell upon a young woman within three yards of him, sitting by the willows, with an infant on her lap. She smiled at his plight, and asked him how he did.

"I — I don't do, no how! thank ye, sir: I mean, *ma'am!*" And, thinking she wished to shake hands, he advanced, but shrunk back again, stammering, "I can't: I'm all molasses!"

It was the first time he had seen her since evil and shame had come upon her; the remembrance of which, together with the innocent witness of it in her arms, would alone have been sufficient to overwhelm him with confusion, not to speak of his own embarrassing catastrophe. She waited for him to recover his wits, then inquired what had happened. He awkwardly told his story.

"Then 'twas you I heard scream?"

"*Did* I scream?" said Archy. "Wal, shouldn't wonder a mite if I did. To have a bunting corset pitch into a feller that way! Didn't I git sweetened?" — rubbing out the

archipelago with wisps of dry grass. "I say, folks hain't got no right to turn loose critters that run at!"

Lucy laughed with sad and gentle humor as he got down by the brook and washed himself; then turned her eyes upon the sleeping babe with an anxious fondness in which every thing else was forgotten.

When, after many minutes, Archy ventured to steal a glance at her, there she still sat, motionless, intent, watching the babe with a mother's all-absorbing tenderness. She was pale and worn, and how changed!—her bright, girlish expression lost in the deep womanly look of suffering, and of love greater than suffering; more beautiful than ever, in the boy's eyes; and with a certain holy calm about her which inspired him with awe.

Was this lovely being the sinner the world called her? Where was the mark of guilt, the blush of shame? Through the pale ashes of burnt-out happiness glowed the rapture of a new joy,—a mother's love. In that face, Archy saw only purity and sweetness; and the heart of him was melted.

"Archy,"—she raised her eyes with a soft luminous look,— "would you like to see my baby?"

"Yours!" said Archy, affecting surprise from some vague sense of delicacy.

"Why not mine, the darling?"—pressing it with ineffable fondness. "Oh, she is just as innocent and sweet! Come and look at her."

He flung the water from his hands, and rubbed them on

his trousers, bashfully approaching; while she uncovered the half-hidden little face.

“She is mine!—my own precious! God’s gift, Archy!” She lifted the infant on her arm, her whole being lighted up with a noble and sweet radiance.

“Oh, the lectle, lectle, pooty thing!” exclaimed Archy with genuine emotion.

“Is she pretty?”—she smiled proudly. “Look!—haven’t I a right to be glad and happy? She laughs at you! Kiss her, Archy!”

“I’m ’feard I shall hurt it!” faltered Archy with mingled pity and reverence. But she held the infant up; and he stooped with a blush, and put his lips timidly to its cheek.

“Baby,” she said, “this is one of your mother’s best friends; one of the truest hearts in all this great sad world you have come into, poor little soul!—She don’t know it now, Archy; but she will some day, if” —

If she lives. But the mother could not speak those words; the thought of the babe being taken from her striking a sudden chill into her heart.

Archy, deeply moved by the kind things she said of him, observed her emotion also as she folded the babe to her breast. He winked the moisture from his eyes, and said chokingly, —

“Guess I’ll go ’n’ pick up my hat: may as well. Then, if there’s any thing I can make for ye, Miss—Mrs.—Luey,” he stammered, at a loss how to address one in her situation.

"I forgot to ask," she said with a smile, "how your flying-machine gets on."

"Hain't done much with that lately," replied Archy. "I'm to work on a cob-saving corn-sheller. Under impression."

"Under impression? What's that?"

"Sperits help me."

"Do you really think that the spirits help you, Archy?"

"Oh, yes!" said Archy ingenuously: "I know they do!"

Luey did not laugh. Her heart was beating fast with painful emotions.

"And are you interested in the money-digging too?"

"Wal, some. Ma says I ain't stibbid enough to work in the shaft. But there's an awful great heap of money there, I s'pose ye know."

"I know nothing!" poor Luey replied, bowing her face over her babe.

"What! hain't nobody told you? I thought Guy or Jehiel" —

"I believe Jehiel is at work there; but he never speaks of it to me. It is all a wretched error, I fear, Archy."

"Think so?" cried Archy, astonished. "You'll see! They've got 'most to the money; and expect every day" —

At that moment a distant detonation was heard, like a clap of dull thunder.

"That's the blast!" said Archy.

"I know the sound too well!" said Luey, looking as if it did not shake and tear the rocks only, but her heart also.

“Old Doctor Biddikin has now plenty of companions in his folly!”

“He’s been flyin’ around all winter like a hen with her head cut off; fussin’ about the diggins, and tryin’ to git Mad out o’ jail. But then there’s money there!” persisted Archy; “though ma says she’s glad I’ve kep’ out on’t, on the hull.”

“So am I. Stay at home with her, Archy: you are blessed in having a mother and a home.”

“I know it! I think on’t sometimes,” murmured Archy, “till I can’t help” — choking. “And you, Lucy!” — he exclaimed earnestly, observing her pallor and sadness, — “you” —

“I — I have no mother, no home!” said Lucy.

“I was goin’ to say, if you want to, you can come to our house and stop: ma’ll let you, I know, if I tell her; and we won’t charge ye nothin’ for your board,” gushed from the youth’s simple heart.

“I was wrong to say I had no home,” she answered after a struggle. “Mr. and Mrs. Hedge are very kind to me. But I thank you from my heart, dear Archy. If ever I need shelter, I shall remember you.”

“Heard from your pa lately?” said Archy in a thick voice, passing his sleeve across his face.

“Not for months: I fear I have lost my father too. He *would* write, if he could; and *some* of his letters would reach either me or Mr. Pelt, I know!”

“Who’s that?” whispered Archy.

A person fishing down the brook had come behind the willows. He must have approached rather slyly, not to have been seen or heard before; and he now stood pretending to arrange his hook, while his features writhed with a grimace which betrayed that he had been listening. Lucy leaned forward to look, and knit her brow as she recognized red-headed Abner Roane.

“Oh! how do you do?” said he, affecting surprise. “I’ve ketched a good sizable trout here: may be you’d like it.” And he advanced, amicably grinning.

“Ma says fresh fish is the wust thing you can eat,” whispered Arhy, blushing.

“I thank you,” said Lucy. “I have no use for it.”

“Oh! haven’t ye? I’m sorry; for I ketched it ’most a purpose for you,” said Abner fawningly.

She penetrated him with a glance which made him cringe.

“That is, I thought of you when I see what a fine trout it was, and was wishing I could give it to somebody that would relish it. Fine day, Miss Arlyn. Don’t ye rather think Mr. Arlyn’ll be home this spring, seeing he don’t write?”

“Have *you* any reason to expect him?” demanded Lucy.

“Only my surmises,” said Abner. “If I get any news, shall I let you know?”

The keen expression with which she eyed him softened a little. “If you hear any thing, if you can tell me any thing, about him, in mercy let me know!”

“Wal, I’ll bear it in mind. I rather expect we shall see

or hear from him this spring, if he's alive. Good-morning! You — won't take the trout? Oh, wal! never mind. I'll let you know if I get any thing."

And Abner proceeded down the stream, grimacing unaccountably; furtively touching — as if he wished to make sure he had it — a letter which he kept carefully in his pocket; a letter which the child of old Ben Arlyn would have given much to have.

"I don't know what he means," she said. "I have little hope left of ever seeing my father again." She shuddered, perhaps with the dread of meeting him if he should come. "But don't think I am unblessed, Archy. I have my baby; she is *my* treasure: the world may go as it will, if I can keep her!" And she folded the infant closely.

"Can't I do suthin' for ye?" said Archy wishfully, seeing that she was about to go.

"Yes," cried Luey, rising. "When you hear people speak ill of me and my darling, tell them how sweet she is, and how thankful I am for her. Good-by, good, kind Archy!"

"Good — by!" — faltered Archy. "Good-by, dear little baby!" And he stood staring with emotion as she bore the babe away upon her breast.

She was soon out of sight. Then with a qualm he remembered the molasses, his mother waiting, and his hat in the field. He looked around for a club; and, having found one, returned to the scene of the late conflict. Billy showed

no disposition to fight, not having yet recovered from the molasses ; and, seizing his hat, Archy clapped it on his head, hurled the club at his enemy, and ran home, eager to relate to his mother the catastrophe of the jug and his encounter with Lucy.

XXX.

THE TREASURE.



MEANWHILE the Muse is impatient to be elsewhere. Off she goes like a fox to the mountain ; and we, pursuing swiftly, are just in time to see her whisk into a hole.

A dungeon-like place, full of Tartarean smoke and gloom ; the ante-chamber of Hades, one would think. In at one end, from above, steals the light of heaven ; at the opposite end flickers an obscure bluish glare, like gleams from the other place. Here we find the Muse, prying into crevices at the extremity of the cavern, in company with a nose which must be Mr. Murk's.

Recovering from our surprise a little, we begin to see where we are. These purplish gleams are of burning candles stuck in chinks of the cave. The smoke and smell are disagreeably suggestive of blasting-powder. These irregular narrow walls are of rock ; of solid, jagged, unstratified rock, the rude floor, and the low broken roof, which has jammed Mr. Murk's hat. The cavern is boot-shaped, and we are in the toe of it. The

old shaft of the money-diggers answers to the leg ; and this is the foot, which our friends have been all winter laboriously excavating, and with which they expect now, at every pulse of the blast, to kick a hole through into the silver-mine of the Spaniards. A boot sublime, gigantic ; but so very expensive an article, that some are sorry they ever put their foot in it.

Hence the anxiety with which Mr. Murk, the Muse, and another individual, are peering into the dim cavity before the smoke of the last explosion has cleared away. To any but the faithful, the aspect would be extremely discouraging. The obdurate igneous rock defies the drills. Only a few fragments can be blown away at a blast ; and often the charge shoots out, as from a gun-barrel, without breaking the rock. This is of the kind called "trap," abhorred by miners. It keeps two smiths perpetually employed sharpening the bits. Not one of the workmen believes there is silver in the mountain ; and you might see them secretly grin at human credulity as they ploddingly earn their day's wages, and pocket the pay.

They are now clearing the fragments from the foot of the boot ; filling therewith a large bucket, or tub, which plies up and down the cavity of the leg. It is lifted by a windlass at the top, emptied, and lowered again. Suppose we step into it as it rises ; for the patch of blue heaven visible above there appears inviting. Daylight brightens around us as we ascend ; and, lo ! we stand on the mountain summit, the broad dome of the sky arched above us, and the azure ocean of the world circling around.

The heaps of excavations have grown considerably since autumn. The forge blazes, the anvil rings; little Job blowing the bellows. Jehiel and another work at the windlass: the rocks rattle as they empty the bucket. To add to the picturesqueness of the scene, Jack the crow sits on the roof of the shed which covers the forge from the weather, philosophically contemplating the world from his commanding perch.

Suddenly Jack flaps his wings, and utters his half-human laugh.

“Ha, ha! laugh, Jack! Mad’s come home!”

Job glances over his shoulder; and, sure enough, there is the junior Biddikin approaching, over the rocks and among the sparse and stunted trees of the summit, from the south.

Pale is Madison, as if he had kept long out of the sun. But he is fat and swaggering, and his eye glitters with its old fire. The crow, flying to meet him, perches on his shoulder, fluttering, bobbing his head, and gossiping unintelligibly.

“Glad to see a feller, old Jack?” says Mad, touched by this unexpected welcome. “But there’s some that won’t be so glad!” he mutters, as the thought of his imprisonment comes burning back, and the desire for vengeance kindles. “Hello, Job! Where’s the old man?”

“Gone to jail for you,” says simple little Job, staring.

Mad winces, cursing copiously the jail, and those who put him in it, as he swaggers towards the windlass.

“You’d better slack up a little,” suggests Jehiel, raising the tub. “You don’t know who hears you.”

“What do I care who hears? Show me the man that dares stop my mouth! Where’s Elphaz Pelt, with his fines, and his cross-eyed villain’s face that’s waiting to be knocked off when I” — Mad stops and stares.

Up comes the bucket from the shaft; but, instead of a heap of rubbish, he sees emerge a pair of small gloved hands holding the rope, a jaunty juvenile cap, frock-coat, trousers, and a pale, peculiar face, which he has a tantalizing sense of having seen before, but can’t guess when or where. It is the person whom the Muse found with Mr. Murk in the mine, and whom Mad may well be excused for not recognizing. He is staring and wondering; when the unknown steps from the tub, pulls a soiled glove from a white jewelled hand, draws a handkerchief from the tail of the frock-coat, and, observing the jail-bird, says curtly, —

“Please dust me.”

The glance of those eyes, the tones of that perfectly feminine voice, bring electric recollection, and flush his bleached cheeks.

“It’s the woman with the devil in her!” he says to himself as he dusts.

“What’s the matter?” she asks, taking the handkerchief again.

“I don’t know — there’s something about you — my arm tingles to the elbow! By George! what is it?”

“It isn’t the devil,” is the significant response; and the youth, thinking she must have read his thoughts, is still more troubled.

“Ah! who have we here?” said a voice from the shaft; and the philanthropist’s head and shoulders appeared, coming up in the tub. “A new brother?”

“Do you mean to say you don’t know me?” cried Mad, regaining some of his lost impudence. “Your nose is longer than your memory.”

“Personally, I recalled your features; spiritually,” added Mr. Murk, “I marvelled. Long confinement has rendered you susceptible to impressions. I perceive that the influence, which was strong on Sister Christina in the shaft, has gone from her to you; and, I pray you, don’t resist it.” The Socratic arm began to wag. “Is our brother prepared to join us?” he asked of the invisibles. “He is, — or nearly so; for that peculiar shake” — Mr. Murk illustrated — “means doubtful, or not immediately.”

In the mean time, Mad was regarding Christina with absorbing admiration, tempered by a certain awe and reverence which he had never before felt for any woman.

“I shall have hopes of him,” she said with knit brow, “when I see him set to work. What are you going to do, young man, now you have got out of jail? Loaf about the taverns? quarrel with your father? get drunk, as usual?”

Mad writhed under her scorn: but his audacity, even the power of resentment, was taken from him; and, so far from answering with his customary insolence, he could not answer at all.

“Come, Mad,” then said Christina, her tones changing

to sympathy and pity; and she laid her hand gently on his arm, leading him aside. "Let's have a little talk together. You think I am hard on you?"

"If any man had said it" —

"Yes, I know: you would have done some rash thing. But I might have said much more, and spoken only God's truth, at which no one has a right to be offended. O young man!" she said sadly, "on this glorious mountain-top, in the light of this beautiful day, look at yourself,—at your past life, at your future; and consider well. I know the good that is in you; and, when I see you going the way of corruption, I grieve, I am angry."

"I do well enough when folks will let me alone," muttered the youth.

"Nobody hinders you from doing well but yourself. If you are lazy, licentious, revengeful, reckless, and so become a miserable, sottish, rotten-hearted, despised old man, or die early in your sins, it is your own fault, and nobody's else, let me tell you."

Whatever the power that inspired her, whether of devil, or of angel, or of woman only, it was too much for Mad, who stood aghast at the revelation of himself which it suddenly opened within him.

"That's the programme," said Christina. "Are you going to live by it? Here, this day, make your choice, and soon; for I have no time or words to throw away on the filthily inclined. But if you mean to be a man, if you feel

the good that is in you, and resolve to turn your powers to some worthy use, I am the friend to stand by you and help you."

"If you will," said Madison, struggling with himself, — "I know what I have been, and what I am capable of being, — you shall see!"

"Your hand on that!" exclaimed Christina. "Now show that you are in earnest by going to work."

"I'm willing," said Mad humbly: "only give me something to do."

"Can you turn that windlass?"

"Yes, if you say so."

"Very well: turn it."

Mad immediately stripped off his coat, and went to assist Jehiel.

Christina seated herself in the door of the hut, with an anxious countenance, pondering unspeakable things, when a brisk little old man tripped by her. He was dapper; he was prim: he wore a new suit of shining broadcloth, a new shining beaver, and an air of complaisant gentility, which made the seeress knit her brows, and sigh.

"How goes the blasting? Any discoveries, Mr. Murk? What! Madison!" he exclaimed in amazement. "My son Madison!"

"I got the start of you," said Mad, leaning on the spokes of the windlass. "I footed it 'cross lots to try my legs."

The doctor's delight at meeting his son was marred by decided displeasure.

“You did wrong!” he exclaimed emphatically. “I had a carriage for you, and a new suit of clothes which I were taking to you for the occasion. You should have come away in style, like a gentleman and a gentleman’s son. I were grievously disappointed. And” — sharply — “what are you doing here?”

“Earning my living,” said Mad.

“Earning your living!” ejaculated the doctor. “Degrading yourself, you should say! Your coat off, — making a Paddy of yourself! I am ashamed of you!”

“Come, Mad,” said Jehiel: “bear a hand.”

Mad obeyed, and the bucket rose in the shaft; the doctor looking on with disgust.

“To be ordered about by that man, like a common laborer! Don’t submit to it! — you, the heir to a tenth part of the treasure, and the son of a gentleman! Come!” — authoritatively pulling Mad’s sleeve.

Mad answered with a backward kick (which took effect on the paternal shins), and continued laboring at the windlass.

“Kick your father, do you?” cried the exasperated Biddikin, seizing him. “I command you, I command you, sir, to come away!”

Mad quietly assisted in landing the tub; then turned upon the senior, gave his neck a sudden tweak, and sent him reeling from the shaft. The way was rough: the old man’s legs were not competent to travel it in that abrupt fashion; and, naturally, he fell. Christina now came forward, flamingly indignant.

“You sor that!” cried the doctor angrily. “That’s his gratitude; that’s the treatment I receive from my son!” — brushing the dirt from his new clothes.

“Is this what you promised me!” said Christina, levelling a glance at the jail-bird. Then turning to the doctor, — “Biddikin! remember!”

Mad, abashed and repentant, returned to his work; while the old man stood trembling and chattering.

“I—I were wrong, perhaps. But he is my son, and I am not willing he should disgrace himself.”

“A son of yours disgrace himself by honest labor!” exclaimed the seeress. “Has he inherited so stainless a name from his father? You called him a Paddy; but I tell you, Doctor Biddikin, an industrious Paddy is more respectable in my eyes than a would-be gentleman.”

“Certainly; and — I—I beg your pardon,” said the old man, looking singularly pale and unwholesome in his new clothes. “I forgot myself.”

Christina turned to the son. “Attend to your business, Mad; and never,” — in a low tone, — “never lay hands on that poor old man again.”

“Right!” cried the doctor. “Let him work: it may do him good. How — how near are we to the treasure?”

“As soon as we are all simple and unselfish, the treasure will appear; but, at this rate, I despair!” And Christina returned to her seat by the door of the hut.

Appearances in the shaft that morning had filled her mind

with disquiet ; which was now aggravated by a contempt for human nature, such as sensitive souls are apt to feel in their dealings with weak men.

Disgust and bitter doubts assailed her ; and for a moment she distrusted not her companions only, but herself also, her mediumship, her heavenly guardians, and her God.

She did not see Guy approaching. He came and leaned by the hut, and heaved a deep sigh of relief as he gazed around at the picture of the world painted by the April sun and haze.

“What illusion !” murmured Christina, looking at the shaft.

But Guy saw only the sky, the horizon, the mountains, forests, and farms, transfigured by distance and the shining miracle of the day ; and, remembering how lately he had felt the vulgarities and vexations of that lower glorified world, he answered, with a tinge of sarcasm in his tones, —

“It is the kind poetry is made of. When in the world, and of it, one sees all its hard outlines, its meanness and literalism ; but, to poets on the peaks of life, every thing appears softened, and swimming in color.”

“That is not the illusion I meant,” said Christina. “Guy Bannington, come here. Comfort me ; for my heart is heavy.”

“What comfort can I give ? I have felt very little myself to-day, till the mountain breeze blew some of the dust from

my soul, and I saw that the earth continued glorious in spite of us."

"Letters?"

"A curious batch of 'em." Guy seated himself on the rock by her side. "Here is one from our worthy merchant-prince, Robert Green."

"Empty?" said Christina, looking for money.

"Empty of every thing but excuses. He has had losses, like Dogberry; notes to pay, and so forth. Besides, he thinks he has already contributed his share towards the work, and says I must call on the other directors for help," said Guy with disappointment and disdain.

"So much for him!" exclaimed Christina, casting the letter on the ground. "Show me the millionaire whose humanity is half as deep as his pocket!"

"He is as solemnly pledged to this work as any of us," said Guy. "But expenses are formidable, and faith is weak. He is not the only eaitiff."

"Why, who now?"

"Deacon Pitman, the good deacon, the fat and pious deacon! I won't show you his letter; 'tis too base! There he goes to the winds!"—tearing it, and scattering the fragments on the rocks.

Christina turned pale. "Has he, too, deserted?—become poverty-stricken just when money is wanted?"

"Not poverty-stricken, but conscience-stricken. It takes a millionaire to make the excuse of want of means; it takes

a deacon to make the excuse of a suddenly awakened moral sense. As long as there was a prospect of getting the treasure with but little trouble, all was well; but, as difficulty increases, faith decreases. And what do you think? The excellent man has just discovered that my connection with Lucy is scandalous, and concluded that he ought not to compromise his respectability by continuing associated with me. As it would have required some courage to tell me this to my face, he wrote it, and dropped the letter in the post-office, and ran."

"Well, well! what next?"

"The worst news of all."

"Don't tell me there is worse! I shall give up humanity; I shall give up the ghost!"

Guy unfolded a letter. "The old patriarch, — Haddow, — the blessed saint!" interposed Christina. "Don't tell me he has failed us! I can't believe it. A muddy-souled deacon, a pusillanimous merchant, — I don't care for them; but that beautiful old man! — he has contributed more than all the rest, and you shouldn't have asked him for money."

"I have not, and he has not refused. The news is sadder than that. See what Mrs. Governor Smith writes. She has been to visit him."

"In a mad-house!" articulated Christina. She read the letter; then folded her hands, and regarded Guy with mute horror and indignation.

"Of course," said Guy, "he is just as insane as we are, — as every person is whose belief is not popular, — who sacri-

fices property and respectability for humanity's sake. The world can't understand such sacrifices, and votes the man mad. But I'm afraid there's foul play in Haddow's case. 'Twas his own family that sent him to the asylum, — to secure his property, it appears."

"I am sick of life! Don't tell me any more."

"It will refresh you to know that I have two letters from the Hon. Cephas."

She looked up anxiously. The expression of Guy's face boded no good of her friend.

"This one is to me. He says he is coming up here in a few days, and will try to bring some money: but he has none to send; for which he is very sorry, and overflows with amiable regrets. This other is to you."

Christina took it eagerly, read it with a scowl, and crushed it up. "Show me yours." She read that also. "Now look!" she exclaimed: "if 't isn't enough to make one's soul blush scarlet! He has no money for the cause of humanity, — the cause he is pledged to support; but see what he sends to me unasked!"

Guy unrolled a crumpled paper which had come in her letter. It was a draft for seventy-five dollars.

"I asked for only fifty," he said with a cold sneer. "It takes you to thaw Snow."

"And did you think he cared for humanity?" she cried with a bitter laugh. "You don't know Cephas. I'll enlighten you. He is a vampire that feeds on women's hearts."

“ ’Tis well you’ve found him out,” said Guy significantly.

“ Yes! — well! — after I have placed myself under obligations to him that cannot be cancelled. People talk of the slavery of the marriage-tie. There’s a worse slavery than that, — the slavery of obligations; when you have accepted favors you can’t repay, and find your relations with the giver grown irksome.”

“ Why have you not warned me of the character of this man?” Guy demanded.

“ Because I have allowed his professions to have weight with me; taking his word before the testimony of my own heart. His purse was always open to me. He protested that he had no personal object in view, no motive but to benefit; and — I was weak. But ’tis clear now. Take it: I’ll none of it!” — refusing the draft.

The face of Guy was troubled. “ Is this the stuff our brothers are made of? Are these the reformers worthy to inaugurate the new and divine order of things? Christina, we stand almost alone!”

She fixed her eyes steadily upon him. “ And what if it is all delusion?”

“ It isn’t possible!” he exclaimed with a nervous, glittering look. “ Christina, tempt me not! I haven’t undertaken this work without deep and terrible convictions. Now, though all desert me, I will stay. Though I was to have no pecuniary responsibility in the matter, and though I now find that entire responsibility settling on my shoulders, I will not shrink.

I relied upon the pledges of others when I hired these men. They shall be paid. The work shall go on. I'll know if there is treasure in these rocks, and no obstacle shall stop me short of the absolutely insurmountable.

“Then all is well!” said Christina, kindling at his fire. “I haven't been deceived. I *have* seen silver in the mountain: it was not delusion. One true soul restores to me my faith. Guy!” — she leaned towards him with a look of passionate adoration, — “you have comforted me! If all the world should go, and only you and I were left, I should be comforted.”

“Perhaps you will be put to that test,” said Guy. “Difficulty is a sieve which only the finest natures can pass: the coarser stop in the meshes. When all the rest are left behind, you and I will have the world to ourselves, Christina.”

He looked seriously and kindly upon her. She repaid him with a gaze of burning love.

XXXI.

ABNER'S LETTER.



ALTHOUGH Squire Pelt enjoyed the luxury of getting his rival convicted by a jury, and lodged in jail for the winter, Mad had achieved a Parthian revenge. An arrow had pierced Pelt's heart, — an epistolary shaft from the vindictive beau, barbed with triumphant taunts, and poisoned with the perfidy of Sophy.

Just as Sophy expected ; and she accordingly had prepared in her defence an intricate web of explanations and excuses, ingenious, but ineffectual. Mad's letter detailed the circumstances of the night-ride ; which, together with other stinging statements, overwhelmed the legal mind of Elphaz with proofs, and caused him, not exactly to break his heart, but to break the engagement. Widow Pinworth was disconsolate. But Sophy, when all was over, laughed heartlessly at her mother for intermeddling ; said she was glad of it ; that she detested Pelt, and that she meant to accept the first man now who offered himself.

The first who offered himself was red-headed Abner Roane, to Widow Pinworth's infinite disgust.

Meanwhile the Pelt mansion verged towards completion, with its noble portico and iron fence, a source of lasting heart-ache to the widow, and of reviving hopes to other mothers of interesting daughters. But Elphaz, all that winter, was saturnine ; was grim ; mistrustful of the sex ; and kept both eyes on his business.

In the beautiful spring days, however, when the birds choose their mates with song, and the bubble-cheeked frogs shrill their amatory strains in the marshes, Pelt is reminded of his blasted hopes. By many things : among others, a most provoking circumstance ; namely, Abner's engagement with Sophy.

He can't stand that. For some time, indeed, he has treated the red-headed youth with intolerable contumely ; and now, bursting abruptly into the office this fine April afternoon, and catching him at a letter, he rushes to seize it.

"Show me that !" he commands, nose white, and eyes scintillant.

"This — this is a private dokemunt," says breathless Abner, putting both hands over it, and looking 'up scared at Elphaz.

"Give it here, I say !" — the nasal gristle whitening more and more under the pressure of rage, like wet sand which barefoot boys tread upon to make it "lighten." And Pelt clutches the Roane collar.

"I — I'd ruther not !" articulates red-head, presenting a no less curious facial appearance, with his terrified smile, stere-

otype edition, *not* improved. "I'd ruther you'd leg'go my clo'es fust! you've tore 'em now!" — struggling to remove the hand from his collar, and turning up a countenance diversified with flushes and pale streaks.

"If you think," — Pelt relaxes his clutch; for he has ripped the lappel a little, and he fears he may be laying himself liable to damages; but he speaks in his fiercest browbeating way, — "if you think I rent this office for you to transact private business in, you're grandly mistaken. Nothing goes on here that I can't have cognizance of. Now understand that."

"I guess I do," says Abner, beginning to breathe again, and putting on a certain insolent knowingness of expression very offensive. "I shall show you this dokemunt just when I please, and not much sooner, I tell ye!" And he grins pallidly.

Wonder and wrath possess Elphaz, and wrath is uppermost.

"Young man!" — and with a snaky finger he points to the door.

"Go?" simpers Abner, with more of the expression Pelt does not like.

"Start!" roars Elphaz. "Down them stairs, or I'll kick ye down!"

"All ready!" says Roane coolly. "But mabby you'd like to see the letter fust."

Pelt would decidedly; and Abner is relieved while he

flashes his fiery double vision on the sheet. Wonder and wrath possess him; and now wonder is uppermost: for the letter, which he supposed intended for Sophy, is addressed to Luey, and commences in this fashion:—

“MISS LUCY ARLYN. *Respected Madam,*—The reason you saw the undersigned a-fishing to-day, and which you may have seen him on previous occasions passing with rod and line by the brook which meandures beyond the house which has the honor of being your residence (viz., Jehiel Hedge’s), the undersigned might explain, and would astonish you, if you would but grant an interview which he has sought in this way in order to get a word with you; not venturing to call openly, fear of offence: though he has in his possession facts of the most utmost importance to you, whom I fear have been wronged by a man I have long served faithfully, and blinded my eyes to his misdeeds, but whom I now suspect is a villain of the darkest calibre” —

Here the sense of the letter disappears in blots where Abner put his hands on it before the ink was dry. It takes the lawyer a minute to recover from the stroke; his features twitching and working remarkably the while. Then he strides to the door, and locks it.

“You keep your distance,” ejaculates Roane, rushing to the window, “or I’ll put my head out, and screeeh murder.”

“Shet that winder!” — Pelt speaks in the dialect of his boyhood, as he is apt to do when excited. “I ain’t a-goin’ to

hurt ye," — drawing back to avoid publicity. "Think I'd dirty my hands with ye?"

"Yes, you would! you'd be glad to murder me, and keep your villany secret! But I've wrote another letter, containing all the facts, and only hesitated to deliver it on your account; and it's in the hands of a responsible party now; and, jest as sure as any thing happens to me, it'll be sent to Lucy forthwith instanter!"

"You're excited, Abner," says Pelt. "Be calm. Le's talk it over. We've always been friends, Abner; haven't we?"

"Friends! And how you've treated me lately! — threatened jest now to kick me down stairs!"

"This is ungrateful, Abner, — because I happen to have an irritable temper," says the conciliatory Pelt, — "after all I've done for you."

"Done for me! you've done for me sights! Hain't you used me like a dog ever since you thought I had a notion after Sophy? Come!"

"Be calm, be calm!" And Elphaz sits down to show an example of coolness. "Think I care for Sophy?"

"Wal, you're like the dog in the manger, then, — mad 'cause I want her, though you don't want her yourself. I'd made up my mind to leave ye. I've stood all I can. But I ain't goin' to go 'thout exposin' ye, by darn!" With which mild oath, Abner pulls on his cap.

"Exposing me? exposing me?" Pelt, forgetful that he

is keeping cool, jumps up excitedly; but sits down again, and pares his nails. "What do you mean by that? Be calm, be calm, my young friend, and tell me what you mean."

"You've robbed Lucy and her father; you took that new house right out of Arlyn's pocket, and burnt his letters to her, and kep' from her where his address was, so she couldn't git a letter to him. You see, I know all about it!"

"You're a bigger scoundrel than I thought!" And Pelt rises rampant, glaring on Abner. "Been prying into my private affairs? — breaking open my letters, have ye? A state's prison job, young man; and, if you don't bring up in a pair of trousers with one blue leg and one red one 'fore you git through, it's 'cause I'm your friend. I *be* your friend, Abner, spite of every thing. I was thinking only yesterday of taking you into pardnerships, and giving you a chance for yourself. As for t'other matter, you don't know nothin' about it. If Arlyn has confided any money to me, he'll find it's much better invested than as if I'd gi'n it to Lucy after her disgrace, and had her give it to Guy; as of course she would, and had him put it into the money-diggings."

This is a new view of things to Abner, and he scratches his head over it.

"But who's goin' to live in the new house?" he wants to know.

"Maybe you will, if you behave yourself," says the friendly Elphaz; "if you go into pardnerships with me, make money, and marry Sophy. I beg of ye, don't be a fool, Abner. You

can't hurt me none, you can only hurt yourself, and make a miserable fuss, by blabbing. Probably," adds the crafty one, "I never shall marry, myself; and if Arlyn don't come back (as is quite probable), why, then, you may as well have a little of his money as anybody: for he would certainly disinherit Lucy, you know; and Sophy's his next heir. You see it'll all come right. Only be discreet. A home in that house, my friend, 'll be a good deal preferable to five years in state's prison; ha, ha!" — patting him significantly on the shoulder.

Pelt has had sufficient experience with juries to know by Abner's look that he has closed with a telling argument; and as feet just now mount the stairs, and the latch is tried, he does not hesitate to turn the key, and fling open the door.

Enter Guy Bannington.

"Ha! delighted!" says Pelt, with no end of smiles and flourishes, — light waves of affability, amid which Guy stands unmoved as a rock.

"Are you at leisure?" he asks, with a glance at Abner.

"Always at leisure to serve my noble friend. Seddown;" placing a chair. "You know Mr. Roane, my confidential clerk," — with a flattering glance at Abner, who fawningly rubs his hands and wrinkles up his face in consequence. "Never need hesitate to open your business before him."

Guy wishes the red-head away, but nevertheless proceeds.

"Squire Pelt, I want some money."

"Reasonable, extremely reasonable: some folks do," says the facetious lawyer.

“And you,” adds Guy, “must help me to it.”

“Any thing in my power — most happy — certainly, my friend,” jingles the metallic voice. “But how happens it you — son of a rich and liberal father” —

“My father and I do not agree on certain subjects,” answers Guy.

“Ah! is it possible? You allude to a certain young lady? or to spiritualism, maybe? Colonel B. is violent on that subject, I allow: and, if he suspects you want money for any object connected with that,” — winking slyly at Abner, — “he might object; rather guess he *would* object, on the whole.”

“But I have a little property of my own; a farm, you remember.”

“Ah, yes! the colonel did give you the Jacobs Farm, over the mountain: I recollect. But have you the deed of it?”

“The deed,” says Guy somewhat anxiously: “isn't it in your hands?”

“I declare, I believe it is. Locked up in the safe there now, ain't it, Mr. Roane? It never was made over to you, I think.”

“Pelt,” — Guy comes at once to the point, — “I want to raise money on that land, by sale or mortgage. I rely on you to get me the deed of it, and to negotiate the loan.”

“But wouldn't it be as well to speak to the colonel about it yourself?” Pelt blandly inquires.

“I prefer to avoid every thing that may lead to a discussion of unhappy topics with my father. *You* need not touch

upon them. Say to him simply, that, since the farm is mine, the title should be transferred; and let me know the result at once."

"I'll do so; and no doubt my mission will be successful," answers Pelt in the most cordial manner. "Always at your service, sir; your most obedient, — delighted with the honor, — good-day."

Then, as soon as Guy is gone, the lawyer throws himself upon a chair, rubs his face up and down with both hands as if washing it thoroughly in waters of glee, and strokes his foretop back with immense content.

"The upstart! Did you see how confounded independent he was? But I'll fix him! I've been expecting him here about that very deed. Oh, I'll play with him as you would with a trout, Abner, that you've got well hooked!"

Abner, who likewise cherishes a grudge against Guy for taking Luey away from him, grins attention while Pelt unfolds his plan. In haste to put it into execution, the lawyer elaps on his hat, and, just as he is going, gives red-head his hand. "It's all right between us, Abner?"

Resistless Pelt! credulous, confiding, flattered Abner! — behold them amicably shaking hands!

"And the letter?" says Elphaz.

Abner strikes a match, and burns the "doekemunt" on the spot.

"T'other one, — in the hands of the responsible party?" queries the lawyer.

Abner smilingly takes it from his pocket.

“Ah, you rogue!” laughs Pelt approvingly. “You haven’t been two years in my office for nothing, you sly dog! You’ve learnt a thing or two. There’s no other letter? and nobody knows what you know?”

Abner takes his oath of it, and returns the letter to his pocket.

“No, no! Burn it, Abner.”

“And about the pardnership?” — Roane desires to know, still holding on to the letter.

“Oh! we’ll arrange that. By the way, you need a new coat. Here — here’s twenty dollars, my boy, from the hand of the best friend you’ve got in the world!” — earnestly, with tears in the legal eyes.

Abner is overcome; whether by the tears, or by the “XX,” is a question. And the “t’other” letter is burned also. And Pelt, having given red-head’s hand a final affecting squeeze, departs on his mission, with one eye intent on circumventing Guy, and the other glassily looking to see how that rascal Roane is to be cut off in his sins, and silenced.

XXXII.

GUY IS LEFT ALONE.



IT is with eventful epochs that history has most to do. But there are others, equally momentous, concerning which not much can ever be told. These are the seasons of silence and ripening which precede the fall of the fruit ; when noiseless Nature, and the mysterious providence of God, perfect, by interior process, the slow, subtle, certain change, which is the real event, whereof the final catastrophe that astonishes the insect on the apple — the human insect on the world-apple — is but the sounding sequel.

It is so with nations reddening on the boughs of the ages. So with the nameless unwritten tragedies of our friends and neighbors which drop daily from the tree of life into oblivion. Even so with this humble story, which also has its final days of calm ripening, — the prelude to the end.

Days concerning which little can be said. The work of the miners goes uniformly forward, inch by inch, with no result amazing to the world as yet. The men continue to smile at human credulity, and pocket their pay, or rather

the promises of pay (for it has come to that), which they accept, albeit unwillingly, trusting to the honor of the chief. All have relied upon Guy from the first ; and now Guy, learning from grievous experience, relies upon himself. There is a certain greatness about the fellow since the directors left him to bear alone the burden which all were pledged to bear. In faith and in action, he never once falters ; carrying out his logic to a stern conclusion.

Mr. Murk, the philanthropist, is phlegmatic as ever : a dull, imperturbable, determined man, who thinks much at all times that he does not speak, and especially at this time. Mad's fiery temper continues repressed, — a volcano, so to speak, with Christina's thumb over the vent. Christina herself is strangely quiet, strangely abstracted ; sometimes sitting half the day gazing at Guy with those wonderful eyes of hers ; all action seeming withdrawn into her burning soul. And Biddikin builds castles in the dim air of the future. And Lucy loves her babe, and forgets to be lonely. And Arehy goes on with his corn-sheller, under impression. And Pelt is pretty well : he thanks you with glimmering suavity. And Colonel Bannington finds himself better this spring than he has been for a year ; hopes, indeed, that he is going to recover his legs. And the end is near.

It is Saturday, late in May ; and the tree begins to rustle. The first leaf is blown to Abner's hand ; the first breath of the commotion touches his cheek, and blanches it.

The said leaf comes whirling down the avenue of Fate called

the post-office. It is, in fact, nothing more nor less than a letter, addressed to Elphaz, bearing a startling postmark, and a most startling postscript roughly scrawled on the envelope.

A crash is coming, and it behooves red-head to stand from under. Indeed, what fealty does he owe to Pelt? The promised partnership does not come to any thing, and he has reason to suspect that Elphaz is fooling him. In that case, his business is to take care of himself. Accordingly, he locks the letter in a drawer, and, still pale with his agitation, hastens to call on Lucy.

Guy is on the mountain. Late in the afternoon, he may be seen issuing from the shaft with a troubled countenance. No treasure yet, and no signs of any. In an hour, the miners will finish their week's work. Upon the events of that hour much depends. Murk is confident, that, at the last moment, the hoards of the Spaniards will be laid open. But Guy is in doubt. Only one thing is certain,—the workmen will demand their wages. He has promised to pay up all arrears to-night. This he hoped to do with Spanish coin; but, that there might be no mistake in the matter, he instructed Lawyer Pelt to use all diligence in raising money on the land placed at his disposal. Pelt engaged that this business should be satisfactorily accomplished early in the week, — certainly before Saturday; yet Saturday is now drawing to a close, and he has nothing for Guy but excuses, and a promise, that, on Monday or Tuesday next, the farm shall positively be sold, and the price paid. And Guy, unsuspecting of Pelt, is now consid-

ering whether, on the strength of this promise, the miners can be put off, and induced to continue the work another week. IT MUST BE SO. His will decides it. The work SHALL go on. He cannot doubt but another week will surely see the silver-mine opened ; and now it seems to him that the invisibles should have some definite prophecy to make for his comfort and guidance.

Anxiously wishing this, he approached a ledge where Christina sat, and questioned her.

“I can only speak what is given me to speak,” she said, with manifest aversion to the subject. “There’s no use in trying to force any thing of the kind,” — with a quick sigh, her brows knitting.

Guy was disappointed, even pained. At the beginning of the work, inspiration had been poured through her lips whenever he desired it ; but now it seemed as if even his spiritual guides were forsaking him. “Why will they not encourage me with one word ? Hasn’t my faith been sufficiently tried ? Don’t I need the wisdom ?”

“It is my fault !” exclaimed Christina despairingly. “I haven’t dared to tell you ; but I fear I am losing my mediumship. When have I given any evidence that I still possess it ?”

“Every day,” said Guy. “There is that laughing hyena,” — with a glance over the rocks at Mad : “you have made a lamb of him, and you keep him so.”

“That’s a woman’s gift. I never yet saw the man I

couldn't influence," — her soul flashed out upon him in one swift searching look, then her eyes fell, — "except one."

"Who was that?"

"Guy Bannington."

"What! are you ambitious of any power over me which you haven't already?"

Her foot tapped the ledge restlessly, and her fingers tore the lichens. He watched her curiously.

"Go away!" she said impatiently. "I want to be alone. What right have you to intrude upon my private thoughts?"

"None," answered Guy, surprised and hurt. "I beg your pardon," — going.

"You are angry now because you can't control me as you do everybody else," she said. "I'm not one of your weak, passive, negative women, — creatures called women. I am an individual, — as much an individual as you are."

"No doubt," said Guy; "and — God knows — I have no wish to control you or any one. To be an individual is — to control one's self."

"Which you do, and which I do not," muttered Christina, following him with intense eyes; more than ever his worshipper at that moment; more than ever dissatisfied with her own restless, perverse heart.

He was moving away, lonely and sorrowful, when Biddikin popped up like a monkey in his path. Guy, tall and austere, looked down inquiringly at the grimacing little doctor.

"Don't let me disturb your meditations," squeaked the

manikin. "But — you must be aware — my pension is five weeks in arrears ; and I suppose I must look to you for it."

"Yes: everybody looks to me for what I haven't got. But couldn't you forbear a little longer?"

Biddikin flirted his head, shaking off the question as a duck does water, and obstinately compressing his lean, dogmatic lips.

"I can only say my pension is due, and must be paid. In case you refuse, the terms of my agreement with the association are cancelled, and the treasure reverts to me."

Guy smiled. "Take it, my friend, and welcome! Pay off these men, and I will gladly leave it in your hands. But seriously, doctor, you are just as much required to furnish funds as I am. I never engaged to contribute a dollar. But I have given many dollars; while all the expenses of your house have been paid by the association. I have been hard at work; while you have been walking about in your fine clothes, fancying yourself a gentleman. Now, if your pension must be paid," —

"Well, sir! well, sir!" spluttered Biddikin.

"Why, man, you are just as much responsible for the payment of it as I am."

"I don't see it so, I don't see it so," smirked the doctor.

"Well, no matter," said Guy. "You shall be paid next week."

"Ah! if you say so, I am satisfied. Next week. Thank you. Fine evening; beautiful sunset;" and, with his genteel flourish, Biddikin passed on.

“Are you sure of the money?” asked Jehiel, who was near.

“I have Pelt’s word for it. He has found a purchaser for the farm, — a Dutchman, whose gold we shall have the pleasure of handling by Tuesday at the latest.”

Jehiel’s face brightened. “That’s good news. To tell the honest truth, I’m in want of money.”

“It is too bad, Jehiel! You have come up here to work out of pure friendship for me, and I’ve never paid you a dollar. And there is Lucy’s board since January.”

“Don’t speak of it. You know there’s nothing I wouldn’t do for you.”

Guy pressed his hand. “You sha’n’t suffer for it. The first of the Dutchman’s gold shall go to you. If I live, you shall be paid.”

Jehiel thanked him with emotion. And now the miners, breaking off work, put on their coats, and got their tools together. Guy knew what was coming. To be obliged to withhold the wages of these honest laborers humiliated and distressed him.

“I know what you expect of me, my men,” he said; “and, if others had kept their promises to me, I should be able now to keep mine to you. But we must learn patience.”

“All these difficulties are necessary for us, or they would not be,” observed Mr. Murk with a dull complacent smile.

The countenances of the men looked gloomy. The reformer’s philosophy did not enliven them. Guy motioned him to be silent.

“I have sold a piece of land, for which I should have received upwards of two thousand dollars this day. Now, there is no doubt whatever but I shall have this money on Tuesday; and Wednesday, my men, shall see every one of you paid. In the mean time, you must not go home quite penniless. You will know how anxious I am to deal justly, when I tell you this money” — giving one of them a sum to divide — “is, as I may say, the blood of my best friends; in other words, the price of my poor dogs.”

The frank and feeling manner in which he addressed them was fast winning their entire confidence and sympathy. The man to whom he gave the money looked at it as if he really did not like to take it.

“I’m sorry you had to part with your dogs, sir. You seem to be very fond of dogs.”

“I like them so well,” said Guy, “that, if I was able, I would keep as many as Actæon had.”

“Who is he? I guess I don’t know the gentleman,” said the miner. “Had he many animals?”

“Fifty noble fellows! There was Lightfoot, and Quickseent, and Whirlwind, and Racer, and Kill-deer, and Bouncer, and more names which I can’t translate; for Actæon lived ever so long ago, and his dogs’ titles are all Greek.”

Then Guy, seeing the men interested, proceeded to relate how Actæon, chancing to discover Diana at her bath, was transformed by her into a stag, and hunted down by his own hounds. His humorous and familiar version of the classic myth charmed his rude hearers. “And remember,” he add-

ed, "the story, strange as it sounds, is true. Actæon is the man whom the sight of female beauty plunges into sensuality, — changes into a beast; and the dogs are his own passions that devour him."

With this pleasing moral he dismissed them; and all were so captivated by his affability, that they forgot to grumble about their wages, and readily agreed to return, and resume their work on Monday.

And now all were gone but Christina and Guy. She remained seated on the ledge; and he, unwilling to disturb her or to leave her quite alone, walked to the verge of the cliff, where he waited.

The sun was setting behind the sea of mountains. The peaks all around were illumined with soft glorious light. The wide green valley darkened with shadow, — solemn, calm, and cool; the hemlocks gloomed black and melancholy; and the last faintly gilding rays were fading from the crags.

"So ends another week!" thought Guy. Inexpressible sadness came over him as he pondered and questioned the future, and thought of his false friends, and bitterly asked himself whether they were less faithful, or only less foolish, than himself.

"Look!" said a voice at his side. "How richly old Mount Solomon takes the sunset in the folds and creases of his velvet mantle!"

Instead of regarding the mountain, Guy looked at her; for it was Christina.

“Is my privaey any less saered than yours?” he asked with a smile.

She made no answer, but laid her head upon his shoulder with the nestling fondness of a tired and penitent child. He paid no attention to her. She waited a long time; then suddenly pressed her lips to his arm, and bit it.

“I hate you!” she exlaimed; and, flinging herself from him, sat down apart, behind the parapet of the ledge.

He went to her, and took her hand. She was shivering.

“You are ill,” he said gently.

“I am eold. I am ehilled to the heart!”

“But you don’t hate me, Christina? You will let me warm you?”

He sat down by her side. He put his arms about her. A strange spasm, half pleasure and half pain, swept over her. He took her head upon his bosom, and smoothed her temples. Then she looked up in his face.

“You treat me as if I was a child.”

“Why shouldn’t I, when you act like a child?” But his voice was tremulous; for he felt that not a child, but a woman who loved him, was palpitating on his heart.

“You are so undemonstrative, so tantalizingly dignified, you exasperate me! But you *can* thaw, can’t you?” she said, pouring all her faseinations into the smile with which she looked up from his breast. “Say, do you really love Lucy?”

“We have nothing to do with Luey now,” he vaguely an-

swered, feeling the subtle temptation creep through his veins; and he folded her closer.

“No!” she responded: “we have nothing to do with anybody now. We belong to each other: don’t you feel we do? Oh, you warm me now! You love me! — don’t deny it. You will kill me if you are not good to me! I am wearing my life out loving you, and you know it; and, O Heaven! what happiness it *might* be!”

To stay the fiery flood which was sweeping him away, Guy answered, —

“You have loved just so before, haven’t you?”

“I thought I loved” —

“Tell me about it.”

“You will hate me if I do!”

“Then haste and tell me!” for he felt that to hate her might save them both. Yet he spoke with tenderest playfulness, and with passion in his eyes.

“I had a friend,” she said after a pause, — “Matilda. She had a lover, — Charles. They were betrothed. Matilda was absent, and — I saw Charles. As he was the only man who did not show a disgusting tendency to fling himself at my feet, why, he was the only man I cared for. I determined to win him; and I did. I pitied Matilda; but — I believed he belonged to me, and not to her. I was a woman: I triumphed. We were married. Then Matilda, broken-hearted, came home to die. Charles grew restless. I saw that he was unhappy. I knew then that he did *not*

love me ; that I had won him by my power only : I had magnetized him away from Matilda. Oh ! ” said Christina with a shudder, “ it has been the phantom of my life. They saw each other, — passed some terrible hours together : he never came back to me. He went to a hotel, locked himself in a room, wrote me a letter, and shot himself. Then she died ; and I had murdered them both ! Isn’t that a pretty story ? ”

She raised her eyes to Guy. His countenance was rigid.

“ What is the matter ? ” she asked. “ Don’t look so ! for Heaven’s sake, don’t ! Have I horrified you ? ”

“ You never spoke truer words ! ”

“ Which ? — when ? ”

“ There *is* a magnetism of the senses which men fatally mistake for love ! God forgive me ! ”

“ What have you done ? What have I done ? ” she cried, shrinking from him, alarmed at his strange aspect.

“ Would you act your tragedy over again ? ” he said. “ You are a woman of great power ; but do you know what has attracted me to you ? what has won, and will always retain, my love and admiration ? Your spiritual gifts, Christina. Only these, my sister. And, if I have had for you a feeling which a brother might not have, so far I have sinned. There is one I love, as a true man loves but one. Spite of all our differences, I love Lucy with my whole heart, — with my entire manhood ; and, before Heaven, she is my wife. ”

Oh, could Lucy have heard him then ! and could Christina *not* have heard him !

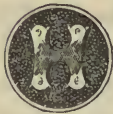
She was paralyzed. She slid from his side like one dead. She lay upon the cold crag, — an instant only; then she slowly arose, pushed back her hair, smiled a glassy smile, and said “Good-by!” with that frightful lightness of tone which is more tragical than the wildest lamentation.

“Christina!” called Guy, extending his hand to her.

But she was gone.

XXXIII.

ABNER PROFITS BY PELT'S LESSONS.



He was hastening to overtake her, when a person who had been searching for him on the summit ran down across the rocks, and intercepted him. The said person had a fawning manner, and exceedingly red hair.

“Hope I don’t interrupt any thing,” he said, standing immediately in Guy’s way.

“What do you want?” demanded Guy, tempted to kick him from his path.

“I have been to call on Miss Lucy Arlyn; and, at her request,” — red-head rubbed his freckled hands, — “I have come to make some very important statements to you.”

“What business have you with Lucy?”

“Oh, you needn’t be jealous, needn’t be jealous, I — I assure you!” simpered Abner. “Purely professional, I protest. She is a wronged, a deeply injured woman; which I very much regret that it is the case.”

Guy’s brows blackened formidably. “What does the meddling fool mean?” his *look* said.

“ Oh, no implication against you, sir ! ” — Roane hastened to explain, — “ but one which you wouldn't suspect, — one which is a villain of the most hardened specie : I mean ” — with theatrical emphasis — “ *Squire Elphaz Pelt !* ” And he went on to specify villainies. Guy regarded him searchingly.

“ These are serious charges, Abner.”

“ I guess I know enough of law to know that they *be* serious charges ; and there's another, which concerns *you*, and which you will be surprised ! About the farm. Pelt is hoaxing ye.”

“ Hoaxing — me ? He dares not ! ”

“ The man which da's to rob and burn letters, da's do a'most any thing. He has a spite against you, for some reason ; and, when he found you wanted to realize money on that estate, he said he meant to play with you as I would with a trout I'd got well hooked, — his very words.”

Guy turned pale. All this he had secretly felt in his heart, as one often feels intuitively the truth of a thing which the will and understanding refuse to acknowledge. But now the hidden bud of suspicion, blown upon by this breath of Abner's, blossomed openly into conviction.

“ But the farm is to be sold : how is that ? ”

“ The colonel, 'stead of conveying over the deed to you, just gives Pelt the power of attorney ; and he's going to sell, and leave you to think you're to have the money till he gits it : then the colonel is going to conclude you can't have it for any such purpose which you want it for ; for if there's any

thing the colonel hates, next to Ben Arlyn, it's spiritualism and spiritualists, I s'pose you know."

White and astounded stood Guy. The absolute necessity of the money; his honor pledged; the malignity of the fraud; not himself only, but honest poor men and their families, to be the victims of it,—all this throbbed in his brain; and his fingers knotted up, as if already they clutched the lawyer's neckcloth.

"Come with me!"

"Where? What for?"

"To confront Pelt."

Abner looked scared. "I have to request that you shouldn't mention my name in this affair for a day or two. He has threatened me."

"No matter if he has," Guy laughed cruelly.

"What!"—Roane stared aghast,— "you consider my life of no value?"

"What's animal existence? Look at Pelt! There's plenty of such vermin infesting the earth. I'll rake this villainy to the bottom, though in doing it I dig a pit for you both!"

Guy hurried down the mountain. Abner regarded him with awe and terror; walking behind him down the steep, crooked path, through the darkening woods, in silence, with dreadful forebodings, and wishing he hadn't meddled.

They reached Biddikin's. There Guy had left his horse; but it was gone.

"She took it," said Mad.

"Who? Christina?"

"Yes. She tumbled out her things, piled 'em into the buggy, got Murk by the nose, and off they drove, not three minutes ago."

"We must walk, then," said Guy.

His vigorous strides put Roane's legs to a severe test, and gave him an exerueiating side-ache.

"Slack up a little; I can't stand it!" he wheezed. "'Tain't probable we shall find him to the office;" at least, Abner hoped so.

"We'll find him somewhere," said Guy.

"I don't see why you need to drag me in," whined red-head. "I thought I was doing you a favor; and now you act as if *I* was to blame, somehow."

"And so you are. You have known of Pelt's villanies for months, and made yourself responsible by concealing them."

"I know enough of the law to know it's dangerous to meddle in such cases: so I kep' still, not being quite sure Pelt *was* a villain."

"And what makes you sure now?"

"If you'll promise not to drag me in, I'll tell you. I'll give you all the proof you want. I'm in his confidence, and I can be of great use to you if I keep so. I can inform you of all his plans, and help a great deal more than if you expose me to him."

“If you are faithful to me, you sha’n’t suffer : that’s all I can promise. I am to circumvent a traitor ; and I shall act as exigencies may require.”

It was quite dark when they came in sight of the office.

“There’s no light there,” said Abner. “We’ll go in ; and if you’ll remember your promise, that I sha’n’t suffer, I’ll give you proofs, and help you put this business through, right up to the handle.”

“In, then !” said Guy.

They mounted the stairs. Abner unlocked the office-door, lighted a candle, and sat down to breathe.

“To business !” said Guy, standing with the sallow glare of the candle on his determined face ; and he tapped the table impatiently.

Then Roane reluctantly unlocked a drawer, and took out a letter, which he passed to Guy with one hand, pushing the candle towards him across the table with the other.

“You see, he’s in New York, and will be here next week. The other letters was in the same handwriting ; and them initials, ‘B. A.,’ is what has convinced me they was from Arlyn, and not from Joe Prince, as Pelt pretended.”

As red-head spoke, he watched Guy’s countenance, which grew sweaty and perturbed over the unopened letter : red-head could guess why.

Guy sat down, wiped his forehead, and drew a deep breath.

“Did you tell Lucy ?”

“ I thought it might be too much of a shock for her to know all at once,” fawned Abner.

“ And you were afraid of shocking me too ? ”

“ Wal, no ; though I didn't know but it would be a leetle agitating for you to hear her father was coming so sudden.”

Guy's silence was so portentous, and his brows gloomed so sultry and thunderous, that Roane was sorry he had said that, and began to compute the distance to the ground from the window behind him.

“ What do you say confirmed your suspicions of Pelt ? ” asked Guy.

“ Them initials — in the same handwriting as the other letters — that convinced me ! ”

Guy struck the table with his clinched hand.

“ Let *me* say what convinced you ! The speedy coming of Ben Arlyn to right his wrongs convinced you. You were leagued with Pelt when it was for your interest to be ; but now you see it is safer to come over to the other side. You meant to keep back from us this letter, in order to disguise your motive for changing.”

Roane's features writhed in the candlelight, as if groping for the grin they had been startled into dropping, and couldn't find again, and couldn't be easy till they did.

“ You seem to think you can read a man's motives better'n a man can himself,” he said, sending the freckled fingers to assist in fixing the grin in place.

“ I can read them better than you dare read them aloud.

As long as Arlyn was away, you didn't see clearly how you were to share Pelt's plunder, except by making terms with him. But Arlyn's return changes all that. He is Sophy's uncle. You expect to marry Sophy. He is well off now, and will probably give her a handsome dowry if she chooses a man faithful to the family interests, but not if she takes a rascal in league with the enemy. You weighed all that with the cunning of a half-fledged lawyer. That sent you to Luey, then to me. So far I read pretty well, don't I?"

The features twisted terribly, and the fingers helped; but it was utterly impossible to get the poor scattered grin into respectable shape again as long as the eyes opposite pierced through and through every thing so.

"Now mark me," said Guy. "Tell all you know of Pelt's perfidy and your own, from first to last, and you are safe; but keep back one word that will be of service to me or to Luey, and down you go in the whirlpool which is at this moment sucking Pelt to destruction. Decide quickly!"

Abner, after much suffering and struggle, decided to speak; and, having commenced, he found that, though a law-student, he was no match for Guy's powerful and searching cross-questionings. These drew from him an acknowledgment of his first important discovery, when he opened the express company's letter containing the notification to Pelt that Arlyn's assignment awaited his order.

"That must have been about the time you offered yourself to Luey."

Roane was forced to admit that it was about that time.

“But of course,” said Guy, “that had nothing to do with your wishing to marry her; and your long silence on a subject of such importance to her was not occasioned by chagrin at your rejection.”

“I wan’t *obleged* to commit myself and injure my prospects here, was I?” — rubbing the bloodless hands.

“And how much did Pelt give you to hold your tongue?”

“Never a cent!”

“Take care, young man!” Guy shook his warning finger.

“Wal — I own — he did give me twenty dollars: that was for some new clo’es, though, ’cause he had tore my collar in a squabble.”

Guy leaned his chin upon his clinched hand. He had much to weigh and decide. How to deal with Pelt? The more gigantic fraud he would leave to Arlyn, of whose return he charged Abner to give no intimation, and to withhold the letter, in order that the lawyer might be taken unprepared. Then with regard to his own affair. He felt that to appeal to his father would avail nothing, and that to charge Pelt with his perfidy would only serve to put him on his guard; whereas, with Abner’s help, he might catch him in his own net. He had in view one paramount object; namely, to possess himself of the money which was not only his by right, but which had been so solemnly promised him: and this he resolved to accomplish at all hazards, if not by strategem, —

for there was little craft in his nature, — then by such bold, swift action as was more congenial to his character.

Accordingly, he left Abner in charge to watch Pelt vigilantly, and to report promptly to him. “And now,” said he, “to satisfy myself, I am going to find him, and hear what he has to say. Will you come?”

“I don’t know but I will. If he has seen you with me, that’ll be the best way. I’ll tell him you’re anxious to know about the deed!” And Abner succeeded in catching it this time, — the grin, as fresh and perfect as ever.

Arrived at the tavern, Guy stopped outside while Abner went into the bar-room, where Pelt was talking, and whispered to him that he was wanted. The lawyer came out upon the piazza, and in his most cordial manner greeted his client. Roane followed them, greedily listening, as they walked up and down.

“Have you acted quite diligently and honorably in my behalf?” he heard Guy say.

“My dear sir,” replied Pelt, “it would not be possible for a man to do more. I have the business in my own hands now; and I engage that you shall have the money by Tuesday, or Wednesday at the very latest.”

“Be it so; REMEMBER!” said Guy, with a stern warning in his tones.

Then, when he was gone, Pelt drew Abner aside. He did not say any thing for a minute or two, but laughed. Indeed, the lawyer seemed to be so full of fun on that pleasant

occasion, that it bubbled and gurgled out of him as if he had been a jug.

"Abner, you'll learn a thing or two by this little transaction: don't ye think so?"

"Oh, I'm learning fast!" and Abner bubbled and gurgled too, as if he had been another jug.

"I don't let every man into my little schemes; and 'tain't every man I'd select to be my pardner," said Pelt, laying his arm over Roane's shoulders, in a manner so very friendly and flattering, that it made him almost regret his treachery. But, if Abner felt any hot coals on his head, what the lawyer immediately added proved a refreshingly cool application. "When you've a grudge against a man, my young friend, don't break with him out and out. You can do him ten times as much harm by pretending to be his friend."

"Yes, I see: much obleeged for the lesson," answered red-head.

Guy yearned to see Lucy; and he felt, that, after her interview with Abner, she would desire to consult with him. But his cares, his disappointments, and, more than all, his last experience with Christina, which had seemed to verify Luey's judgment of her, and which had left in his own bosom an uneasy sense of guilt, deterred him. He resolved to send her a letter. He went home to his father's house: he entered the library. There he sat writing when the bell rang, and he heard Pelt's voice inquire for his father.

The colonel was in bed in the next room. The lawyer was admitted to see him ; and there Guy overheard words which more than confirmed Abner's story, and which sealed Pelt's fate.

The next morning, he despatched Ann Maria with the letter to Lucy. In the mean time, what a night he had passed ! What memories and wrongs beset him ! — the difficulties of the association ; the shameful desertion of its supporters ; Pelt's villainies ; Christina ; poor Lucy and her babe, and her father so suddenly returning.

And now was the sabbath come, — day of rest ; sweet season of peace ; a spring-time sabbath, when heavenly mists are on the hills, and the orchards are pink and white with blossoms, and a thousand perfumes scent the air, and Paradise and the happy garden are restored, with all things fair and calm inviting to holy communion. Ah ! man of law, busy with the world's craft ; incurable paralytic, near the close of an ill-spent life ; troubled men and women all, — make the most of this day's beauty and seclusion ; bask in the glory of the celestial gates, now open ; drink the divine waters that flow down thence softly into the soul, — this day ; for ye know not what a week may bring forth.

XXXIV.

A STORM IN THE AIR.



UY kept away from Biddikin's until Monday, not wishing to meet Christina until she had had time to recover her equanimity. A useless precaution.

As he entered the house in the afternoon, he was met by Mr. Murk, whose eyes looked wise and fishy.

"The sister was very suddenly impressed to depart," remarked the philanthropist. "I remonstrated; but I perceived that it was to be."

"Christina?" cried Guy. "Where is she?"

"I conveyed her on Saturday evening to the Mt. Solomon House, — taking the brother's horse," smiled Mr. Murk, "at her urgent request."

He deliberately drew a letter from his pocket. Guy seized it, hastened to his private room, and read:—

"I can no longer be of use to you, and I go; having already staid a day too long. My *spiritual gift* — for which

alone you valued me — went before. I lost it when I lost myself. It will return to me only when my tranquillity returns; which can never be with you. I loved you, Guy Bannington. There, take my heart; tread it beneath your proud feet. I neither hate nor love you now. I am ice. The universe wails around me; but I hear it with dull ears. Farewell! I am weary, and wish to sleep.”

The letter bore no signature: but well enough he knew what hand had written it; well enough he knew from what heart had come this desolate broken cry.

And now he had lost her too; the gifted, the glorious one, who had led him by her shining influence to this peak of difficulty, and vanished. Surely, he thought, he would never have been here but for her. The desertion of all the rest he could better bear than this. It was a stunning stroke; and for a moment he felt dizzy, alone, disheartened, unsupported.

Then he remembered the crown she had plaited for him with bleeding hands. He took it from a casket, and placed it once more upon his temples, groaning in spirit.

“This is the one true prophecy!” he said. “O Christina! you have crowned, not my head only with thorns, but my soul also, and pierced it cruelly!” — *how* cruelly, he knew not yet.

At a knock upon the door, he put away the crown, and, with a start of disagreeable surprise, admitted Abner. He knew by the comer’s face that the time to act had arrived, — the dreaded, imperative time.

“He has gone over the mountain,” said Roane; “or rather around, by the South Road: for I suppose he was afraid of meeting you if he had come this way. The Dutchman which is going to buy don’t understand English; and the conveyance of the property will be made and the money paid — all in gold — over there, where his friends are, this afternoon. I was in the office when Dutch Peter came for him. He went an hour ago. He can’t get the money into the bank to-day; for he won’t be back much ’fore evening, if at all.”

Guy put a few questions to assure himself; then waved his hand: “That will do! — go!” As soon as he was alone, he drew a diagram of the two roads. By one of them, Pelt would return: by which? Had Guy known that, his plan of action would have been as clear and direct as his resolution was. But now he was much in doubt. Suddenly the room grew gloomy; the day was darkening with clouds: a shadow fell upon the diagram. Upon his mind also fell a shadow, it might be of the clouds, or it might be of his own misgivings, — one cannot say, the mind is so sympathetic with Nature, and is so easily affected by its changes.

Guy was studying the problem when Mr. Murk came in, who said he was impressed that his assistance was necessary. Guy regarded him searchingly; considering well before he spoke.

“A thing is to be done that involves risk, and requires nerve. I ask no one’s help.”

“I am impressed,” said the philanthropist, “that I am to help;” and he smiled dryly, — the stolid, big-nosed man. Guy perceived how important it might be to have such an auxiliary. He stated his purpose, and the difficulty. Murk nodded with half-closed sapient eyes, and pronounced judgment, — “What is necessary to be done, must be done,” — and promised his support.

Guy named a rendezvous in the woods, and departed, leaving the philanthropist to follow. Then the latter communed silently with Socrates and Swedenborg for some minutes; both arms wagging, strangely enough, there in the solitary room: for whatever you, profound reader, may think of him, it is plain that he was not a hypocrite in his own eyes; as few men, probably, ever are. No doubt, Murk really thought he had a “mission,” as so many others have thought they had, on equally reasonable grounds; and, when his fists jerked, no doubt he believed it was the wise Athelian and the mystical Swede that did it.

“Yes, the time has come,” he said with a dull gleam of satisfaction.

He walked to the kitchen, where he found Mad cleaning a pistol. The young man had been restless and sullen since Christina’s departure; muscles averse to work; volcano mutinous, missing the thumb. His ambition now was to shoot something. “Birds,” he told Mr. Murk.

“You have a precious soul, brother: did you ever think of it?” the philanthropist solemnly inquired.

“Two of ’em!” said Mad, sprawling in a chair, and showing the bottoms of his boots.

“A precious immortal soul, brother: how can you desecrate it by killing the innocent birds? Poor brother!” added Murk with a pitying groan.

Little jets of the volcanic flame began to shoot from Mad’s eyes.

“Look here, old Peppermint! it’s my opinion that kind of humbug is about played out. *She* is gone; and, by thunder! she was worth all of ye. I’ve worked, because she wanted me to; and I’d have done any thing she asked. But what are *you* working for? That’s what I’d like to know.”

“For humanity,” Murk answered.

“For your granny!” Mad irreverently responded.

“For humanity,” repeated the philanthropist with dull, grim visage. “It is a great work. *She* is gone, and others will go. They were instruments. The chief is but an instrument: he will go too. Then the real chief—the God-sent leader—will appear.”

Mad stared. “And that is you!”

Murk gave a solemn nod.

“It is a great truth. You are one of the first to recognize it. I have my commission from the Lord. Will you be my disciple? For the time has come when I must choose my own.”

Mad stared again, astounded by the tone of deep religious conviction in which these words were uttered, and which gave

him a new glimpse of Murk's character. Where he had hitherto seen only fathomless thick mud of stupidity, a rock-like purpose now reared itself, bare and grand. For, even in the man we laugh at as a fanatic, a stupendous claim, supported by immobile, granitic earnestness, produces an imposing effect. We know that he is wrong; yet the zeal with which he believes himself right impresses the imagination. A child may be terrified by a mask which he has seen put on. It is therefore not surprising that Mad, who did not of course really believe in Murk any more at this time than at any other, should have been a little awe-struck by him. The philanthropist perceived his advantage, and was persuaded that he had secured a disciple.

“Important truths bearing upon this subject shall be revealed as you are prepared to receive them; but, for the moment, a secular matter requires attention. Money which is necessary to the association is in the hands of a brother, from whom I foresee it must be forcibly taken. The chief claims the money as his own, and will seize it on these grounds. That may be expedient: but, with me and my disciples, all things are lawful; and what is necessary to be done, we are divinely authorized to do.”

The ethics of these remarks Mad did not particularly understand; but when the name of the auriferous brother was mentioned, and the nature of the enterprise definitely stated, he understood perfectly well. And never did disciple more eagerly enlist in a master's service than he on this occasion

accompanied Murk, — not so much for the love of humanity as for the love of adventure ; not because he revered the philanthropist, but because he hated Pelt.

Guy had by this time reached the rendezvous in the woods, where he waited, revolving his plans. The day was sultry for the season, the sky was thunderous, the forest breathless, the air heavy with gloom. Overhead, seen through the thinly leaved branches, the massy clouds blackened and rolled. Through the hollow silence the wild brook ran, prophesying doleful things ; and night was coming on.

At length, Guy heard feet approaching ; and, looking out from the bushes, frowned angrily at sight of Murk's companion.

“What have you brought this fellow for ?” he muttered.

“The brother will be of use,” replied the philanthropist. “I have taken the responsibility.”

“That was not for you to do ; but no matter now :” for Guy saw that it was too late to raise objections, and that there was no way now but to trust Mad, and to make use of him. Mad, who had heard what was said, grinned a malevolent grin ; while Guy hurriedly sketched his plan for the reception of Pelt, who might now shortly be expected at any moment, on either of the two roads.

XXXV.

A THUNDER-CLAP.



RS. PINWORTH was setting her genteel but very frugal tea-table ; while Sophy was occupied in making over her winter bonnet into a summer hat.

“ I wish you would tell me what to put on the front,” said the young lady.

“ Oh, something red ; you’re so very fond of red ! ” alluding to the Roane top-knot.

“ There ! ” — Sophy threw her bonnet, — “ if you can’t stop twitting me about him, I won’t do another stitch of work in this house ! ”

“ I wouldn’t if I was you, you’re going to marry so well ! ” and with a sarcastic expression the widow bent her tall, spare form, and reached across the table to lay a plate. “ Go and see who is at the door.”

“ I sha’n’t stir a step : I’m nobody’s servant, madam ! ”

“ Well, miss ! if ever there was an ungrateful child ! ” — The bell rang with sudden jangle. “ Who can be ringing in

that way?" The widow peeped through the blinds. "An old-boots man, I guess. I do wish such wretches" —

She opened the door about six inches, and showed a face from which such wretches might certainly take a hint. A large, rough-looking, weather-beaten, grizzly-bearded man, in slouched hat and coarse worn clothes, with a travelling-bag in his hand, — all covered with dust, — stood on the piazza.

"Nothing!" said the eurt widow; and she was biting off communication abruptly with the door, when the traveller threw up his hand.

"Salome! don't you know me?"

Mrs. Pinworth opened her eage again a few inches, and, deigning to look at the speaker, was betrayed into a slight surprise.

"Why, Benjamin! is it you?" and, after some hesitation, she opened the door a few inches farther, and extended her hand stiffly. "How do you do?"

"Sister!" heaved the agitated voice of the big dusty man; and, bursting into the house, he caught the prim widow in his arms, and hugged her to his great warm heart, and kissed her pale virtuous face with his bearded lips.

She disengaged herself as quickly as possible, arranged her crumpled collar, and brushed her sleeve. "You'd better step in," she said in a formal voice. "Sophy, here is your unele Benjamin."

Now, Sophy remembered her great-hearted unele with rather more affection than she was wont to feel for her rela-

tives ; and she ran to meet him with an impulsiveness which seemed enthusiastic compared with her mother's frigidty. He kissed her heartily, and shook both her hands at once ; then looked around expectantly.

“ And Lucy — where is Lucy ? ”

“ You'd better sit down,” said the widow ; “ though you're very dusty, and perhaps I'd better get you the broom ” —

“ Where is my child ? ” demanded the traveller anxiously with glistening eyes. “ Her first ! Is she well ? ”

“ Sit down,” said the straight-backed relict, resigning herself to the dust, “ and I will try to tell you.”

“ For God's sake ! ” he articulated, “ what has happened to her ? I am sure you never would give your brother such a welcome as this if all was well ! ”

“ I have done my duty by Lucy faithfully,” — with a self-righteous look. “ She will tell you so.”

“ Then she's alive ? — thank God for that ! She is my idol, my all, as you know ! I couldn't have borne it if any thing had happened to her. But why hasn't she written ? Not a word have I heard from one of you for more than a year, as often as I have written.”

“ You have written ? ” cried Sophy. “ We all thought you was dead.”

“ Dead ? when I've been digging gold, and sending it on here by thousands ? Near ten thousand dollars I've sent to Pelt ; and I could have brought as much more but for my

terrible anxiety, — not getting a word from anybody here. I couldn't stand it any longer."

"Why, brother Ben!" exclaimed the widow, suddenly warming, "have you been so fortunate! — Sophy, bring a glass of that elderberry-wine. — You must be thirsty. Let me take your coat and brush it for you. Our tea is almost ready; and you're just in time. How good it will seem — won't it, Sophy? — to have your uncle with us! I hardly knew you at first, you are so changed! You've sent Mr. Pelt — how much?"

"Hasn't he — hasn't Luey — told you?"

"I must confess," said the bewildered widow, "they have kept it pretty secret: not a word of it has ever come to my ear."

"I don't believe Luey knows of it herself!" cried Sophy; "and I see now what Abner has been hinting lately about Pelt!"

"It isn't possible! — you don't think — he is a villain?" said Arlyn, startled. "Call Luey! Why don't one of you bring her? Is she in the house? But do let me wash off a little of this dust, so she'll know me."

"Pelt has grown rich all of a sudden, and built him a grand house," said Sophy.

"He wished to marry Sophy," added her mother; "but I have mistrusted something wasn't right, and opposed the match."

"There's some mistake," replied Arlyn. "He has

drawn the money; but he wouldn't certainly think of swindling me! Must be he never got my letters. I—I must see him. But Lucy before any thing! Why—why do you look so?"

"I have something very painful to say to you about Lucy," said Mrs. Pinworth.

"No, no! — nothing bad?"

"Be prepared, dear brother; and remember that you have a home and a sister. Sophy will be a daughter to you in her place."

"Her place? What has become of her? Tell me at once, — every thing!"

"Alas! she has disgraced us all! She eloped nearly a year ago."

Arlyn had risen to his feet, alarmed; but now he sank back stunned.

"Not Lucy? — not my child?"

"Her conduct cannot give you any more pain than it has me," said the widow mournfully. "It has cost me days and nights of prayers and tears."

"She has not — not done wrong?" gasped forth the poor pleading father.

"She is not married," replied the excellent woman rigidly; "but she has a child."

Arlyn did not speak for a minute, — his face ghastly and vacant, his eyes staring, his big heart slowly heaving as if it would burst. Then he said, or rather whispered, —

“Who is the villain?”

“Guy Bannington,” said the widow with severe precision.

“And you may well say ‘villain’!”

“He — HIS son!” All his wrongs at the hands of the colonel rushed back upon him. He clutched aimlessly and helplessly at the air; then, swayed by a fearful agitation, he staggered to his feet.

“Why! you ain’t going? Do stop to tea, brother!” The words did not seem to reach him for a moment; but at the door he paused, as if dimly conscious that some civil phrase was expected of him.

“Thank you, sister: I have business. ’Twill soon be dark. I sha’n’t want any supper. Thank you kindly.”

He shook the mother’s hand, and then the daughter’s, with noble courtesy, smiling a forced and haggard smile; then went forth with a pent-up tempest and gathering thunders in his breast, which made the black sky and muttering hanging storm-clouds seem idle mockery.

XXXVI.

LAWYER PELT GETS WET.



QUIRE PELT had by this time completed his transaction with the Dutelman, and mounted his wagon, with Guy's farm in his great-coat pocket. He spread the garment on the seat, and sat on it; the whole man, the entire Elphaz, so to speak, twinkling exultantly, as he arranged the pocket at his side, where he could feel the precious lump, into which fifty acres of mountain-slope, with buildings, had been by the alchemy of a shrewd trade converted.

"I'm sharp!" he seemed to be congratulating himself as he drove away. "I've outwitted Guy this time. He could take Lucy out of my hands; and he's welcome. It took me to come up with 'em! He'll never see this money, any more than she'll see the color of old Ben Arlyn's California gold. Ten to one, Arlyn never'll come back: he'll die in the mines, or on the Isthmus, or get killed in a quarrel, — he's a rash fellow, — and that'll be the last of him. And even if he *should* happen to get home alive, — why, I shall have

warning. The most he can make of it, any way, is a breach of trust; and I can fight him with the law: the colonel'll help me, and like the fun. I must manage to choke off Abner somehow. If I'm going to rise in life, I mustn't have him hanging to my coat-tails. I *will* rise: I'll be the richest man in *this* town. Talk about honesty being the best policy! I should be a miserable plodding lawyer all my days if I tried to be honest. As it is — Go 'long!" cried Pelt to his horse. "It's going to rain like great guns, and I've no umbrella."

He was undecided which way to go, — over the brow of the mountain, by Biddikin's, or round by the South Road. This was the easiest route, but the longest.

"I'll let the nag take his choice," said Elphaz. "There ain't much difference, as I see. Yes, there *is* a difference. It's going to rain, and I'll go the nearest way."

Upon so slight a circumstance hangs the destiny of a man! To avoid a shower! — as if that was any thing to a good-feeling fellow like Elphaz. The thought does indeed occur to him that there are other disagreeable things, besides wet clothes and a saturated cuticle, which a man might reasonably wish to forego.

"But, if I meet Guy, I'll tell him the farm ain't to be sold till to-morrow; and I'll have the money in the bank by that time."

Whip, whip! The clouds thicken, and roll portentously. On the summit of the mountain-road an awful scene presents itself. The whole valley before him is darkened. The for-

ests seem hushed with terror. The mountain-tops have a sense of what is coming : they listen, and breathlessly wait. The far western peaks, and the peaks still beyond, are like pillars, over which hangs and sways a terrible black canopy. Some pierce and tear the ebon mass ; some are half buried in rushing curtains of rain ; and about some the lightnings play like serpents.

The sun could hardly yet be down ; but already it was fast growing dark.

“ I shall get a ducking, sure as fate ! ” the lawyer mutters, seriously troubled ; as if a man might not be wet by something more tragical than rain-water !

As he passes Biddikin’s, — the huge solemn crags glooming dreadfully over the woods on the left, — the pygmy of the place runs out, and screams, —

“ Pelt ! Squire Pelt ! wait a minute ! Here’s Jehiel Hedge wants to ride : he has hurt his foot, and can’t walk. ”

“ I’m in a hurry ! ” growls Pelt, and whips along, to the wrath of the little doctor.

Ah ! had you been a little more obliging, Elphaz ! For was not there a sort of providence in it that Jehiel should sprain his ankle that afternoon, and claim a passage in Pelt’s buggy ? Pelt, in denying him, denied also his own guardian angel, if he had one. For surely, had Jehiel gone with Elphaz, what happened that night would not have happened. It mattered little indeed to Jehiel ; but oh the difference to Elphaz !

“Think I’m going to stop for a clod-hopper, when a storm like this is coming? It’ll be pitch-dark now going through the woods. Lord, what lightning!”

He stopped, however, long enough to put on his coat, and to feel the golden lump in the pocket thump against his thigh. Then whip, whip! It was down-hill now all the way; a little too much so perhaps, in places, for rapid driving. And now the woods are entered, — the thick woods, where it was impossible to hasten; and now the heavens are sealed utterly with the sable seal of the night and the storm; and now — what is this?

The horse comes to a quick halt, and absolutely declines to proceed. Pelt tries in vain to prevail upon him; scolds him, whips him, jerks him by the reins. Bonny groans, but will not budge. It is very dark, and growing darker every instant. The woods all round are fearfully empty of sound, save where the torrent pours; and black, save where the distant lightning winks. And now the loosened thunder topples down upon them, bursting in their tops; and tumbles crumbling away in the far muffled silences; followed by slow pattering rain.

“Go ’long, you fool!” cries Balaam, eudgelling the poor beast. “I’ll learn you to balk this way!”

Whaek, whaek! echo blows of the whip-stock in the hollow woods. The animal, instead of advancing, backs the buggy round against a tree. The angel of the Lord, whose sword is the quick-drawn lightning, stands before; and Balaam

knows it not. Is the beast afraid of the lightning? Balaam will see.

He gets out of his wagon, and goes to the animal's head; feels carefully about with hand and foot; discovers no impediment; and begins to lead cautiously forward. Just then, the Ethiop face of the sky yawns from ear to ear, — a chasm of flame, by the dazzle of which he sees the woods before him all ablaze for a wild swift instant, and the red-lighted road stretching sinuous away among the still sentinel trees. Then the darkness shuts again like a trap, enclosing Balaam and beast.

But in that fiery instant he has seen much. The picture is still in his brain, — the red-lighted road before him, with neither log nor limb across it. Why isn't the way clear, then? What ails the brute? "Come along!" he mutters; and the brute comes willingly now: when, lo! Balaam himself is stopped by an invisible sword across his throat.

A sword, — or something else; a rigid branch, perhaps. He puts up his hand, and clutches — a rope.

And now the traveller grows suddenly superstitious. Not the darkness, not the moaning brook, not the seanty rain dismally pattering, not sheet-lightning and horribly crashing thunder, with the circumstance of the beast's mysterious stopping, struck such fear to his soul as this little rope tightened over the road. A tree fallen there would not have appalled him, — that might have happened in the natural course of things; but a rope suggests contrivance, and means mischief.

And now Elphaz recalls the former time when his horse committed an extraordinary freak in the night, and remembers that Mad was at the bottom of it; and feels it in his stirring flesh and hair that Mad is also concerned in this.

The many threats of his hot-blooded young rival; the convenience of the time and place for private murder; the tempting gold in his pocket, thumping his thigh as he walks, — all this, rushing over him, makes his knees weak and his blood chill. And devoutly he wishes now that he had been a little more accommodating to Jehiel; realizing in a literal manner the truth, that the merey which man withholds from his neighbor he withholds far more fatally from himself.

He feels hurriedly along the rope, and finds it fastened to a tree. He can stoop under it easily enough; but it is needful to untie it for his horse. This he is struggling to do; when — flash! — and by the momentary illumination he sees a man standing not three yards off, groping in the buggy with his hands. Darkness drops like the daguerrotypist's cloth over the camera; but the view is taken, and the plate of memory will retain it faithfully till the judgment-day.

What does the man want, groping there in the buggy? Is it fortunate, or the reverse, that the lawyer has the gold in his pocket? Panic seizes him: he will abandon his horse, and run. He pauses only to feel what his coat has caught upon; for something holds him. He hastily grasps it. It is a MAN'S HAND!

“Who are you? what do you want?” bursts the hoarse voice of Elphaz.

Straightway he is hurled upon the ground, throttled, and robbed, by brigands two or more. To one of these he elings with desperate grip. He rises to his knees with him, and will not be shaken off. There they struggle; and now once more the broad lightning glares, and the two see each other face to face.

Face to face, the enemies, for one fearful white instant of time!

Then deluging thunder drowns all sound, and the blackness of darkness shrouds what is done afterwards.

Assuredly it is an evil time for Elphaz Pelt. Crafty man! is this, then, thy hour of triumph? and was it so easy to circumvent thy fellows, nay, God himself, who has declared thou shalt not steal, and that thou shalt love thy neighbor?

Retribution has certainly come to thee this night; as, swift or slow, it comes to all evil-doers at last. For now, though the bandits may be baffled, another danger awaits; yea, is coming! Old Ben Arlyn is after you! Old Ben Arlyn, stung to fury by his wrongs, is tramping up the road, in the wild night, amid the dropping thunderbolts, as wild as they, — tramping on and on, to hunt this villain of villains called by your name.

You, who thought him far away, and he so near! Having encountered Abner, he has learned from him the whole maddening story, — how you received the letters enclosing

those which Lucy never got ; and how you appropriated to your own avarice the dowry which would have insured for her an honorable marriage, and saved her from shame. For Guy — as Abner explained — appeared sufficiently to love her, and but for the colonel's threat of disinheritance, and the fear of bringing her to poverty, would undoubtedly have made her his wife. The colonel, then, and you, Elphaz, are chiefly responsible. But the colonel was an open enemy ; whilst you were a treacherous knave. Thanks to red-head's friendship or fear, Guy's offence is placed second on the list ; and against you, first and foremost, the full torrent of the father's anger is let loose.

Tramp, tramp, he comes ! At sight of the glimmering windows of Jehiel's house, where he knows are his daughter and her child, his mighty heart is wrung. He dares not trust himself to see them. He will spare her, his idol, desecrated, but still dear. So, gulping down his sorrow and his wrath, he hurries on amid the dropping thunderbolts, eager to do his dread errand.

Cunning one ! do you chuckle now at your signal success in life ? Do you exult at the fine prospect ahead, and laugh at your duped victims ? Nay, you may as well die where you are as meet this powerful impetuous father in his rage.

Yet it is a terrible thing to be cut off suddenly in one's sins, almost with the grimace of craftiness on one's face !

Tramp, tramp, he comes ! Through the thick wall of darkness and the occasional chinks of lightning ; now losing the

path, and reeling among the tree-trunks, till his way is illumined ; amid the noise of the water-course, of the echoing thunder-claps, and of the storm in the tossing branches, — tramp, tramp, tramp, — he comes !

What he will do with Pelt when he finds him, it is not probable that he has once paused to consider. To hold him by the throat, and say, “ Thus and thus did you ! ” is the hot surging purpose of his soul. Let us hope he would not murder Pelt !

For more than a mile above Jehiel’s he keeps on, meeting no one, — not a living being on that lonesome road. But hark ! there was a sound ! — a scream suddenly suppressed. He listens. A hoarse terrified tongue breaks loose at intervals ; now low, quick tones of hurried conference ; then a pistol-shot ; and now hoofs and rattling wheels, as a horse dashes past him with a bounding vehicle. A faint gleam shows him the reins loosely flying, and the vehicle empty ; and the frightened animal plunges on into the blind night.

But the voices ! they have suddenly ceased. Arlyn quickens his pace, running by the lightning. Through the brushwood he has seen a human figure retreating. Has Pelt recognized him by a flash, and fled ? Blank darkness impedes his pursuit ; and all at once he stumbles.

What’s this, then, lying like a log in the middle of the road ?

He feels it with his hands. He touches something wet, — not the wet from which umbrellas would have saved you, O

hapless Elphaz! For rain is cold; but this is a thick tepid pool. Good God! it is a murdered man outstretched here under the trees!

Elphaz, is it you? Answer! Late so glib of tongue, are you now so silent? It is too terrible! This cannot be our twinkling, lively friend Elphaz!

Rough Ben Arlyn has seen death in too many shapes to be very superstitious about it; but there is something indescribably shocking here. A corpse not yet cold, and he in utter darkness stumbling over it! His brain is bewildered. The wheels of his impetuosity have been too suddenly blocked by this horrid clay. His reason seems deserting him. He remembers his own fierce thoughts, and for a moment dreams that he is the murderer! This frightful illusion is heightened when once more the heavens open, and the forest is filled with a glare brighter than noonday, showing in its dazzling intenseness every minute shrub and twig, the sprinkled dust of the road, the lifeless form outstretched, the blue cravat rumped, and the ghastly, staring features, cross-eyed even in death.

XXXVII.

THE NIGHT VISIT.



IT is even so : fretting, scheming, overreaching, it has come to this.

Stark and still he lies there, unconcerned ; assaulted, and he will not prosecute ; indifferent alike to his clients' interests and his own ; what was so absorbing an hour ago — fees, stratagems, riches, revenge — of no importance now ; the grand new house he was building, henceforth of no use to him ; as well off on the ground there as anywhere, — six feet of blank earth quite sufficient ; deaf to the thunder, blind to the lightning ; not at all in danger of catching cold ; done with umbrellas forever ; what is called DEAD. How does it seem to you, Elphaz ? Do you sneer at honesty now, or chuckle at your start in the world ?

Dead : his horse tears the buggy to splinters in the woods, — the damage and expense will certainly be considerable, — and he cares nothing ! Dead : his most powerful dread enemy stands over him, and he fears nothing. Dead : as it is the destiny of each to be, if not at one time, then at another time ; if

not in one fashion, then in some other fashion. And what is the great difference? A few years more or less of dreaming selfish dreams, and of grasping emptiness, — are they of such wonderful importance? Dead: and is this the end? What do you think of it, Elphaz?

Some such thoughts whirl chaotic in Ben Arlyn's breast. Not a reflecting man, but a man of passion and instinct rather, with a heart much huger than his brain, — still, on this occasion, he is shocked into moralizing, and grapples, in a rude, blind way, with the giant phantoms, — the vast shadowy questions of life and death and the hereafter. And what is it to hate a man? and to have him dead — where is the satisfaction? His emotions roll through him like the thunder; and the gleams of light he has on these vague subjects are like the sharp-edged lightnings that divide momentarily the darkness, and let it close again.

“God! God! God!” he calls, flinging up his clinched hands, and wringing them helplessly, hopelessly, overwhelmed with his wrongs, his griefs, his baffled rage against this very man, and his awful doubts. Then he laughs a ghastly laugh, as the thought suggests itself, — the jeering thought, — “What so curious as a dead lawyer?” There should be something sacred and venerable about a dead saint; for he has lived a life in this sphere which will flow on serenely and blissfully in the spheres beyond. But a crafty lawyer! — ha, ha, ha! The laugh sounds fearfully in the stormy forest.

It is evident that the poor man's sufferings and shocks have been too much for him, and that his reason is unsettling.

The evening wears on ; and all this time one sits watching. The dead man there, the frantic father here, the hands yonder eagerly clasping the gold, the deed that has been done, — all these come near her own heart and life : but she sits in the chamber, unconscious, scarce aware of the thunder, or the hissing rain, or the tempest tearing the trees ; her whole soul in her eyes, and her eyes watching her babe.

It lies softly pillowed on the lounge. It is asleep. Slowly and faintly it breathes. Its little face is very sad and pale. It is ill ; and maybe it will die, the mother thinks. Therefore with anguish such as only those can know who have loved a babe, and felt it was their all, and that even this one precious lamb might soon be taken from them, — her eyes dry, but her heart full of hot tears, — Luey gazes on that darling face.

And now the footsteps seldom heard of late ascend the stairs quickly ; and drenched and breathless, from the wild warfare of the elements, Guy enters the room. There is a gleam of excitement in his face as he shakes the water from his cap ; but it yields place to an expression of pain and anxiety when his eyes rest upon the mother and the babe. She does not look up at him, her heart is so full.

“Luey ! what is the matter ?” He bent over the pale, sad little face, — oh, so sad ! — for, indeed, what is there so touchingly pitiful as infancy — tender, innocent infancy —

stricken with silent suffering? "Siek?" and he knelt down by its side; affection and pity mastering his strong nature; and all his wrongs, real or fancied, towards the mother and the child, burning and stinging him. If it should die now, would it not be through his neglect? He shook with a silent convulsion; and tears, which *she* could not shed, rushed to his eyes.

"O Guy!" she burst forth desolately, "what have I done? Haven't I suffered enough? I cannot, I will not, let this darling go!" — clasping it wildly. "Is there no kind Father? is there only a cruel Fate?" And in her look was what he had never seen there before, — rebellion against Providence. Be not shocked: such is the human heart. The Thracians, in old times, drew up in battle array against the thunderbolts of heaven, shooting their arrows into the clouds. Why smile at their idle resistance to the gods? Have you never, Christian man or woman, arrayed your will against impending afflictions?

"We know there is a Father," said Guy. "We will not madly question: we will hope."

"It is easy for you to say that! — you, who are all absorbed in other things!" — and Lucy selfishly held the babe from him.

"Has the doctor seen it?" he asked.

"No: I have nobody to send. Mrs. Hedge works so hard, — she has to support us all now: Jehiel gets no money. O Guy! why do you drag them into your ruin, if you will persist in ruining yourself?"

The young reformer held his face in his hands. What could he answer her? He felt that all her predictions concerning his associates and their schemes had thus far come true; and he had nothing to oppose to her bitter complaint.

“I told Jehiel he should be paid. I would have perilled my soul to keep my promise; and I have kept it.”

“Have you paid him?”

“No; but I have come to pay him;” and Guy produced a heavy little bag. Either his dark words, or the unexpected sight, alarmed Lucy.

“What is that?”

“Gold, — the price of my farm. O gold, gold!” he said, crushing the words in his teeth, “bait of hell! ruin of souls! I hate you! Where is Jehiel?”

“He hasn’t come,” said Lucy, staring at him with dismay.

“Then keep this accursed stuff for me till morning. I will come early, and pay him.” He dropped it into a drawer of the bureau. “It is better out of my hands: would I could wash off its stain forever to-night!” Impulsively he bathed his hands at Lucy’s pitcher. He turned, and saw her eyes still fixed upon him. “Lucy! you follow me with hard, questioning looks. You think ill of me, I know; and the time may be near when you will think worse. And what have I to say for myself? Nothing!” And he looked at his hands sorrowfully.

The tempest and rain lashed the windows ; the house trembled, and seemed full of hissing sounds. Luey held her babe closer.

“ These are the nights that make one’s hair turn gray ! ” said Guy, standing still in the room, with a countenance surcharged with troubled thought. “ Luey, you think I have not loved this child of our love. God knows ! And your father — what shall you say to him of me ? ”

Her heart was full of forebodings about her father’s coming ; and the question wrung from her a cry of pain.

“ How can I see him, — show him my fatherless babe ? and yet I must. And I will tell him all, that he may not kill you ! ”

“ Kill me ? ” Guy smiled. “ If that would right all wrongs, how willingly would I lay down my poor life ! For I grow weary, Luey. Yet tell him, not for my sake, but for his, for yours, for the sake of our little Agnes here, — God keep her ! — tell him, that, villain as I seem, you are blameless. I will tell him that, and bare my breast to him. But who knows the future ? The morrow will come, and what will it bring ? Hear the old elm roar and creak ! Will it wave serenely in the breezy morning ? or will it lie conquered and despoiled, its mighty roots upturned ? We will fear nothing, but cheerfully take what comes. And now good-by ! Good-by, my pale, still Agnes ! ”

“ Will you go ? ” asked Luey, “ in this storm ? ”

“ I will go and send the doctor to this poor little lamb.

What are the wind and rain to me? I am drenched already. As for that stuff, keep it hid, and say nothing of it. It was meant that I should not have it; but I have it! I will send Mrs. Hedge up to sit with you: she will be better company than I can be to-night."

He kissed the babe; he kissed the mother also, with quivering lips. Still he lingered; for his heart was full, and the shadow of the morrow was heavy upon him.

"The good Heaven bless you both!" he said, and hurried away, with a burning in his breast which made it a relief for him to get out once more into the cold dash and turbulent uproar of the storm.

The thunder has passed on, and now the tempest is king. His sceptre smites the forest, and crashes among the crags.

"The giant-snouted crags, ho, ho!
How they snort, and how they blow!"

The house-sides are beaten and buffeted and lashed by clashing boughs, and the floods of heaven pour against them incessant whistling volleys. And now two women watch and whisper with awe-hushed lips beside the sick babe, waiting for the absent Jehiel, and for the physician who does not come.

"Oh, they will let my baby die!" moans the agonized mother.

"Where can my husband be this awful night?" says the anxious wife: so selfish does love make us all.

Well might she ask; for Jehiel was having a somewhat ter-

rific adventure at this time. Having waited long at Biddikin's for the rain to cease, he grew impatient, knowing how troubled Hannah would be about him ; and set out, lame as he was, wild and wet as the night was, to walk home, — alone through the woods, where lay the murdered man.

In the mean time, the horse had run home to the tavern, snorting and foaming with terror, harness torn and flying, minus the vehicle ; and the alarmed landlord had started with an umbrella, a lantern, and a little boy, to look for the missing traveller, — through the tempestuous woods, on foot ; for it was a one-horse tavern he kept.

And in the woods, coming from opposite directions, Jehiel and the landlord met, and found the lost lawyer stretched across the road, with a gory, ill-washed wound in his neck, — in the dark and rainy woods.

And the lad went before with the lantern and the shut umbrella, winking at the gale ; and Jehiel and the landlord followed, bearing the dead Elphaz, — horrible burden ! For thus the “ whirligig of Time,” which sometimes whirls very fast, brings in his revenges. Scarcely two hours ago, Pelt refused the lame laborer a ride in his buggy ; and now, lo ! the latter helps to give *him* a ride in a very different fashion.

So they got the ghastly horror as far as Jehiel's gate, where they met the doctor in his chaise coming to see Lucy's babe. Well, maybe a dead lawyer is of more value than a living infant ; at all events, these men seem to decide it so : and the thing that was Elphaz is got into the chaise, and back

the doctor drives ; and the men go with it to the village, — to the tavern, — to Pelt's room, where he sleeps this night as he never slept before, not to be disturbed in the morning by the birds singing.

For the morning shall come as usual ; and the birds shall sing ; and the world shall wake cool and green and glistening after the storm ; and sunshine and sweet smells and a new joyous life shall delight the sense and soul of glad men and women, and strike the hearts of others with a dull mockery ; and, happier than many, one shall not awake.

XXXVIII.

THE MORNING AFTER.



WHEN the tempest had spent its force, and the clouds were broken, and the few visible stars seemed wildly sailing and hurrying; when the young day-child dimpled with its rosy fingers the bosom of the black nurse-mother Night; when the coeks crew in the sheds, and the sparrow trilled his eestatic catches under the dripping leaves, — then the widow Brandle was awakened from the sleep of the righteous by a noisy knocking.

“Who’s there?” putting her head out of the window, and showing her chaste night-cap to the universe.

It was one in whose breast there had also been a storm, which had now spent its fury, leaving the thoughts of his head drifting and hurrying like the clouds and stars.

“Widder Brandle! I knowed your house, and it seemed to have a sort of friendly feeling towards me,” — the friendless, broken man!

“Why, bless me!” — and the night-cap went in at the window, and peered out presently at the door; and she shook

the wayfarer's hand, and greeted him there in the morning light with such cordial musical speech as made the birds stop singing in their wet covers to listen.

“ Well, well ! ” said the rough Benjamin : “ this 'erc's a heartier welcome than I got from my own sister. I begin to feel right again. I've had a trouble here ! ” — pressing his brow. “ Every thing's been rolling and rolling ! — Thank ye, widder ! ”

He tottered into the chair she gave him ; and, bending forward to look at him by the yellow candlelight, she felt her heart bleed with sympathy for the unspoken grief that had shattered him.

“ It's Mr. Arlyn, my son, ” — to Archy, who came rubbing his eyes open : “ don't you know him ? ” — smilingly, yet with a glistening tear and twitching lip.

“ Archy, my boy, it's old uncle Ben, as you used to call me. Your mother and me's old friends, and I ventered to call on her in a time of trouble ; for I know, if ever there was a Christian woman, she's one. ” And he wrung the hand of the genius. “ There, widder, don't take any steps for me. I only jest want to set a spell till I get myself again ; then I'll go. ”

“ I'm going to fix a room for ye, and have ye go right to bed, ” said the widow. “ You must git off them wet clo'es the fust thing. Been out all night, haven't ye ? ”

“ I scource know where I've been ; but I've had a hard night, that's sartain ! The town don't seem what it did. How long has Squire Pelt been dead ? ”

“Squire Pelt? — he ain’t dead!” exclaimed Archy.

“Are you sure?” said Arlyn with an earnest, troubled look.

“I’m sure I see him driving round yesterday,” replied Archy.

“Well, well!” — the wayfarer pressed his brow, — “I mustn’t let my mind run that way: it sets me afloat again.”

The room was soon ready; and the widow and her son led the great, helpless, submissive man into it. Archy was left to perform the functions of valet; while his mother hastened to boil the tea-kettle, and prepare some wholesome, warming drink for the chilled traveller.

With much exercise of his inventive faculties, and a considerable outlay of muscle, the genius succeeded in getting the guest into a marvellously tight-fitting shirt and into bed. Then presently came the widow with a steaming bowl of tea.

“It’s yarb-tea,” said she with her simple, sympathizing smile. “It’s the best thing to keep a body from ketchin’ cold. Raise his shoulders a little, Archy, so’s’t he can drink.”

“Thank ye, Salome; thank ye, sister;” and, having drunk, he lay down again. “See here, Abner: tell Squire Pelt” — he rolled his eyes a moment, then closed them with a weary groan.

“He thinks he’s to Mis’ Pinworth’s: he’s jest a little out of his head,” whispered the widow, holding the bowl, and regarding the patient pityingly.

“Think he knows about Lucey?”

“That’s it, depend upon’t; and it’s enough, my son, to craze any man. Oh, little do gals know the heart-breaks they bring on others as well as themselves when they go wrong! Poor Mr. Arlyn! I wonder if his feet don’t want a jug o’ hot water. I declare,” — putting her hand under the sheet, — “they’re jest as cold and clammy!”

A jug was soon got; and she was placing it at his feet, when suddenly he started up.

“Lucey! — where is she? I must ‘a’ been dreaming. Widder Brandle, ain’t it? Thank ye, thank ye, widder!” — and the haggard face tried to smile gratefully. “Don’t take any steps for me. Only, if you see Lucey” —

“What shall I say to her?” asked Mrs. Brandle, laying him gently baek upon the pillow.

“I forgive her, I forgive her, I forgive her!” — and his voice broke into sobs.

“Does she know you have come?”

“Maybe not. Break it to her easy. I don’t feel to blame her. She had no mother to look after her. ’Twas my fault to leave her as I did, — my poor child, my poor ruined child!”

He covered his face; and presently all was still, and the widow stood wiping her tears.

“Maybe he’ll sleep now,” she said, listening to his slow, difficult breathing; “for he’s all wore out. And, Archy, I’ve been thinking I’d better go and see Lucey.”

“O ma, I wish you would! I’ve wanted ye to so many times!”

“Wal, the right time hadn’t come. I’ll jest drink a cup o’ tea, and go right over this morning, the fust thing.”

It is now full day; and the mountains are glorious with their clear cerulean peaks, and floating wreaths of mist illumined by the sun. A delicious, breezy morning, wonderful to behold after such a night! Peace and beauty kiss each other on the shining hillsides and by the fresh showery groves. But in the village ferments an extraordinary excitement. The coroner is here, and the sheriff comes riding fast, and magistrates and lawyers are astir,—all but ONE. He sleeps: the rest are awake, or think they are. He lies with dollars on his eyes, which see not the glory and the peace of God this day. And the rest?—alas! how many, here and elsewhere, stand or move, with dollars on their eyes, which never see the glory and the peace of God!

“If you go ’cross lots,” said Archy, “look out for Jehiel’s plaguy corset!”—meaning the pet-lamb, of molasses memory.

Jehiel had not come home; and Lucy had been up all night waiting for the doctor, who was waiting for the morning in order to make his postponed visit; when Mrs. Brandle entered the room where the mother was with her sick babe.

“I was afraid I might disturb ye if I knocked,” she whispered; “and Mis’ Hedge told me to walk right in.”

“O Mrs. Brandle!” was all Luey could say.

“Oh, the poor, dear thing!” exclaimed the widow, blinded by her tears.

She had felt some natural awkwardness on meeting one who had shocked the moral sense of society and slighted her own son. But at sight of that changed face, which she had not seen since the fatal summer evening, nearly a year ago, when it went so sweetly and cruelly smiling away from her door along with Archy and the flower-boxes; and at sight of the stricken little innocent, with its brief, strange history, and its young soul warm from the bosom of God, — the true woman’s sympathy upwelled from the clear spring of the widow’s heart, sweeping away all prejudice and all traces of resentment; and she remembered not the errors or the sins, but only the sufferings and the needs, of her sorrowing sister-woman.

“Why, dear!” said she, wiping her own eyes, “don’t cry!”

“It is so good of you to come!” said Luey. For she felt that this was no self-righteous matron, looking coldly down upon her distress, but a neighbor indeed, — simple, poor, uncultured, yet bringing the golden key that unlocks hearts and the fountains of long-pent tears.

Conscience-stricken to think she had kept so long away, and reading in the pining baby’s face a mute piteous reproach of the world’s condemnation, Mrs. Brandle murmured humbly, “I’d have come before; and massy knows, if I’d

thought I could be of any help, I'd have jumped at the chance. What a sweet little baby! Archy said it was. How long has't been sick?"

"Not long: I didn't think she was very sick till last night. She don't cry any more now. Oh, if I could only hear her cry as she used to!"

"Well, we won't worry about it right away, I guess," said the widow soothingly; but her heart was troubled for the child. "The angels love little babies, and they'll take care on't. Let me have it a little while, and see if I can't give it some life. I've a notion babies need something besides the breast: they want a good strong, healthy natur' to draw from. You're too wore out yourself to do much for it now."

"I know," said Lucy, "my suffering has weakened her. She has nursed away my cares, and I have given her sorrow with my milk."

"It was a relief to you, but 'twasn't so well for the baby," softly answered the widow. "But, dear, I want you to think of something else now; for I've news for ye."

Lucy, whose spirit was full of whispering prophecies of ill, turned paler than she was, with a painful apprehension.

"Yes, dear: there's a visitor to my house that'll be glad to see you." And Mrs. Brandle smiled to re-assure her.

"Oh! my father?"

"Yes, dear; and he sent me to you with a kind word."

But Lucy was too weak. The news, softly as it had been .

broken, was too overpowering. For a moment, all things swam and faded around her; but she did not swoon. Dizzy and trembling she sat, while the widow told her story.

“I’ll go — I’ll go to him at once!” — recovering from her bewilderment. “God keep me strong, God keep me strong!” she prayed.

Mrs. Brandle was to stay and take care of the baby until her return; and she was hurriedly putting on her things to go, when Archy arrived.

“Why, my son! — why didn’t ye stop with him?”

“He ain’t there,” said Archy with a doleful countenance. “’Most as soon as you was out o’ sight, he started up; and, spite of every thing, he would go. He wore my shirt; though, ’twas so small, he was splitting it all to pieces. He put on his wet clo’es agin, which you left by the fire, — and they hadn’t begun to git dry: said he’d left some money somewheres, that he must look after.”

“And you let him go!” exclaimed the dissatisfied widow.

“Why, I couldn’t help it, ma! I found out he wanted to go to Mis’ Pinworth’s: so I helped him, seein’ I couldn’t hender him, and left him to the door. Then I come to tell ye; though they’re havin’ an awful time in the village!” added Archy, lowering his voice.

Lucy stood as if transfixed with her distress.

“Don’t feel too bad, dear; but I suppose you won’t feel like going to see him to your aunt Pinworth’s, will ye?”

Lucy roused herself: yes, she would go; and kissing the

unconscious little Agnes, and murmuring to Mrs. Brandle, "Pray for me!" she hastened forth with her double grief, with her divided anxious love, into the mockery of the bright musical morning.

Oh! how could the earth be so beautiful? — the birds delirious with the joy of song; the sky deep and clear as a poet's mind, with a few golden voluptuous clouds afloat in it, like large dreamy thoughts. How could the river pour with so glad a rush, and her heart be so wretched and fearful?

She crossed the river, and stood at her aunt's door. For the first time since she left it in the dew and beauty of that other morning so long ago, she stood on the old familiar steps with a sinking and a heart-sickness which the blithe, bright, careless girl of those earlier days never knew. And oh! to think that she had left behind her a baby that seemed to have been dreamed into existence since! and that she was come now, so full of dread and shrinking, to meet her father!

Trembling and agasp in the whirlwind of memories and fears that beset her, she lifted the old brass knocker. It dropped with a hollow forbidding clank. No response from within; and she waited. And the same birds she knew and loved of old flew and sang around her, and the sunshine slanted just as it used to along the paint-worn piazza floor, and the garden smelt as sweet. But there was a ghastliness about it all that was more intolerable than pain; and she knocked again. Presently the door was opened about three inches, and Mrs. Pinworth's face peeped out.

Lucy asked for her father.

“ You ! — to speak of your father ! You have no father. You don't deserve to have one, nor friends either. My brother Benjamin is here, and you have nearly killed him ! ”

“ Let me come in ! let me see him ! ” pleaded Lucy.

“ Not in my house ! — never in a respectable house like mine ! You have brought disgrace enough on us all ! Go away ! Don't come here again ! ”

So this woman without sin stoned Lucy.

“ You refuse me ? you won't let me see my father ? ” said the outcast, amazed into something like calmness. “ You cannot, aunt Pinworth, be so unjust ! Aunt Pinworth, as you hope for mercy, show me a little now. Let me see my father. ”

But, all the time Lucy was saying this, the ascetic female was saying to herself, “ If she sees him, she'll work on his weak nature, and get the money, which will do us a great deal more good than it will her. ” For already her heart was set on inheriting her brother's substance, and making his daughter a perpetual outcast. Not consciously to herself, perhaps ; for the devil that tempts is subtle, and doubtless he flattered the widow that she was acting from a high moral motive.

So the door was elashed together in Lucy's face, and fastened.

Statue-still she stood, utterly unable to realize the harsh

inhuman judgment ; vaguely believing the door would soon be opened to her ; till she looked, and saw Sophy's face at a window, glancing out upon her with an expression cold and relentless as ice. Then she felt the doom irrevocable ; and she turned away.

Back across the bridge she went, over the stream, — the singing, dancing stream, — and through the village streets ; walking in a sort of trance ; seeing all things as through a glassy film. The house-fronts, gardens, and even faces that stared upon her, appeared like objects she had known in dreams. The crowd around the tavern, as she passed, was but a crowd of gibbering phantoms, with neither sense nor soul in common with her ; and the phantom that started out before her — a red-headed phantom, fawning and rubbing its hands — floated in an atmosphere of unreality like the rest.

“ Perty exciting time, Miss Arlyn : I suppose you wouldn't like to go in and see the corpse, would ye ? ”

The questioning look and words came to her vague and strange through the glassiness of things. What corpse ?

“ Haven't you heard — how Squire Pelt was murdered last night, — robbed of a heap of gold ? ”

The stroke of the announcement rent the film a little ; and startling light, swift, electric memory, streamed in upon Luey, shocking her back into consciousness.

“ Murdered ? — gold ? ” — she repeated with white lips.

Just then, young Biddikin swaggered to the spot.

“Such a row over a dead man! Lots of cheap talk. Hear the robins over in the orchard there! They make me laugh! ‘Kill him, cure him, give him — *physic!*’ They say it jest as plain! They’re inclined to make a joke of Elphaz.” And Mad spat cynical tobacco-juice.

“Seems to me you come to town early this morning, Bid-dikin,” said Abner cringingly, fingering his memorandum-book.

“Whose business is’t?” Mad retorted, opening his jack-knife. “I wanted to see the sport. We don’t have a murder every day. Hear them robins! ‘Give him — *physic!*’ Can’t help laughing!” and he picked up a stick to whittle.

He whittled; while Abner turned his back, and slyly made a note of something. Lucy in the mean time stood waiting for she knew not what, spell-bound by the new terror which had come over her.

“They found a pistol up in the road there this morning, when they went to look,” said Abner, chewing his pencil. “They say it’s one of Colonel Bannington’s pistols,” — with a cunning side-glance at Lucy.

“See here!” cried Mad in a bullying way: “I know about that pistol. I was coming down the road when they found it.”

“Well, what do you know?” Abner softly and persuasively inquired, with his note-book ready.

“Any fool might know!” said Madison. “Ain’t it plain as day? Pelt was going to sell Bannington’s farm for him,

and borrowed Bannington's pistol; 'cause 'twouldn't be safe to be carrying so much money through the woods in the night, ye know."

"The pistol had been fired off," observed Abner over his shoulder, after scratching a few hasty words.

"Wouldn't Pelt be apt to fire?" returned Mad. "Of course he would, and drop his pistol after he got shot himself. You don't suppose the man that shot him would drop his pistol right there, do ye? Though he might, — these Dutchmen are such cussed fools."

"Oh! then you think the Dutchmen follered him up?"

"I didn't say I did. But who else knew he had the money?"

"Well, some knew," simpered Abner. "And it remains to be seen whether the Banningtons lent the squire a pistol."

"If they didn't, then he took it, most likely," muttered Mad. "He'd as soon steal a thing as borrow it, Pelt would. — Darn it!" and he flirted blood from his thumb, which he had whittled instead of the stick.

"They've gone over to the colonel's to see if he or Guy knows any thing about it," Abner mildly suggested, with his back turned.

"See here! — whose words ye writing down now?" bullied Biddikin. "I know ye of old, red-top! You're in your element if you can be writing down something to swear to. Well, you're welcome to any thing I say. — Wonder when

the inquest's going to set. Hope they'll let a feller in to see the fun."

"Come! — don't flirt your blood on me, if you please!" said Abner, with a cowardly hatred and disgust in his servile polite face.

"*Kill him, cure him, give him — physic!*" — Mad recklessly mocked the robins. "Say, red-top: do you earry to-baeker?"

Why did Luey linger? What was this horror that benumbed her; that made her for the moment forget both her father and her babe, and all her wrongs and fears? The murdered man; the bag of gold; Guy's nocturnal visit and wild words; the pistol found, — in this vortex every thing else was lost.

"There comes Guy, along with Aaron, now!" said Abner.

Already she had desiered him coming. He rode up to the tavern-steps, and alighted amid the crowd. His countenance was pale and stony eold; inserutable as a mask. Ereet and composed he walked, stared at by the vulgar; and disappeared in the tavern. Then Luey broke the spell that held her; left Abner writing, and Mad bloodying his stiek; reached home she searee knew how; flew to the bureau-drawer where lay the guilty gold; saw that it was undisturbed; and then sank down swooning beside her babe, at the wondering widow's feet.

XXXIX.

THE INQUEST.

AND now, while the coroner is impanelling his solemn jury ; while the news of the murder thrills from house to house, and from village to village, and is telegraphed to New York and Chicago, to be read there in the evening papers ; and the blackbirds, brisk stump-speakers, appear to chatter about it down in the burnt swamp-lot ; and everybody is wondering, and doubtless some hearts are quaking, — now, at twelve o'clock, noon, on the shady grass by Biddikin's front-door, sits little poorhouse Job, with bread and cheese, placidly munching.

At which time, constable Aaron Burble, having been to summon to the inquest the German who paid Pelt his money, returning, sees Job sitting on the grass, with bread and cheese, munching, and drives up.

“ Where are the folks ? ” asks Aaron.

“ Gone,” says little Job, mildly staring. “ Doctor gone up on the mountain.”

“ When will he be back ? ”

“Do’no’. Had a fight.”

“A fight! Who with?”

“Him and Mad, — they fit; coz Mad was out las’ night, and was goin’ off agin this mornin’; said he was goin’ to find the pistil.”

And Job nibbled his cheese, unconscious how his feeble words shot conviction into Aaron’s massy brain.

“Come here, my son.” Aaron got out of his wagon, and gave him a penny. Job crammed the contents of his right hand into his mouth in order to receive it. “What was Mad going to find?”

“Pistil. Shoot birds with. Lost it in the woods last night,” said Job through crumbs.

“How do you know that, my son?”

“Heard him and doctor fighting. Thought I was asleep,” — with a faint twinkle of the lustreless large eyes. “Mad struck him.”

“Whose pistol was it?”

“Do’no’. Mad had it ever since they killed the bear.”

Aaron gave Job another penny for his thought; at which the latter delivered over to his molars the reserved contents of his left hand (namely, the cheese), and grinned at the munificent subsidy, — a copper in each grimy little palm.

“What was Mad doing last night in the woods?”

“Guess shooting birds.”

“Shooting birds in the night?”

“Y-a-a-s! Him and Mr. Murk.”

“Murk! Where is Murk now?”

“Guess up on the mountain.” Job started, and grew pale. “There comes doctur!”

And Biddikin, having entered the house by the back way, came through, stepping excitedly, banging the doors, and fiercely calling Job. Seeing a visitor, he came out.

“Doctur,” cried Aaron with a tact he bragged of afterwards, “my dear doctur, how do ye do?”

“Broken-hearted, broken-hearted!” — and the little man shook his head and compressed his lips with an expression of desperate grief.

“Why, what now, doctur?”

“Oh that son of mine! I know, I know!” — with dark significanee.

“Ah! what’s the matter with your eye, doctur?” asked Aaron.

“Mr. Burble, Mr. Aaron Burble!” said Biddikin, quivering with passion, “what do you think of a son that strikes his own father? — yes!” thundered the doctur, “actooally drors his fist on him! — don’t he, Job?”

“Y-a-a-s, seen him!” said Job.

“Mr. Aaron Burble, MR. AARON BURBLE!” repeated Biddikin, all his past differenees with that gentleman forgotten in his present agitation, “look at me, sir, — look at me! Now tell me, — now tell me! Am I a dorg?”

“A dorg, doctur!”

“Look at me well, Mr. Burble! Am I a dorg? I ap-

peal to you! Do I look, do I act, do I smell, like a dorg? And, sir!" — rising to a climax, — "do I deserve the treatment of a dorg?"

"Bless me!" said Aaron sympathizingly, examining the doctor's green eye, "that was a sorry blow!"

"Yes, sir! yes, Mr. Burble! that were a sorry blow! — a blow that felled me to the earth, Mr. Burble! And for what? for what? Because I desired to keep him out of danger; yes, out of danger! I know what I say, I know what I say! — OUT OF DANGER! For a father, a father, Mr. Burble, will screen his own child, his own flesh and blood, won't he? though that child may have guilt on his hands, — I say guilt on his hands; and I know what I say!"

"Why," said the constable, "I left Mad loafing about the village this morning" —

"In the village? — in the village?" cried the doctor, alarmed. "Who ever heard of such ordacity? He'll put his neck in the very halter next!"

"In the halter, doctor? How so?"

"No matter!" muttered Biddikin, shaking his head mysteriously. "I've said enough. He is my own son, my own flesh, is Madison!" And, growing circumspect in his speech, the more he was questioned, the more provokingly knowing and obstinately secret he became.

"Well, doctor," said Aaron, "I am summoning witnesses; and I want you to go and report before the coroner what you have said to me."

Biddikin turned pale as death.

“Said? I have said nothing! — have I, Job?”

“N-o-o-o!”

“No, not a word. It’s a plot against my son! Not a word have I — not a word can any man say against my son Madison. He’s a very dutiful boy, an affectionate child; isn’t he, Job? Tell the truth, Job!”

“Y-a-a-s!” — and Job counted his treasures on the turf.

Aaron, however, avowed his determination to take both the doctor and Job along with him as witnesses.

“To give evidence against my own flesh and blood? It is horrible! — it is inhuman! — it is atrocious! — ain’t it, Job? Sir, I shall not go. Here I stand, — a rock, a colossus! Touch me at your peril!”

Upon which, Aaron, laughing, and without stopping to consider the precise legality of the measure, threw his official arms about the rock, the colossus, lifted it lightly, conveyed it gently, and placed it in the wagon. Colossus was astonished; colossus was rigid; refusing to bend to a sitting posture, and showing a log-like tendency to roll off the seat, — a tendency which the good-natured constable indulged so far as to give the adamantine doctor his choice of position on the wagon-bottom. Then taking the mildly wondering little two-cent millionaire, with all his riches, upon the seat by his side, Aaron drove back towards the village.

Colossus spoke. “You are assuming a tremenjuous responsibility, sir! — tremenjuous! There’s papers in that

house. It isn't locked. Papers of immense value! You are responsible for their safety. You are laying yourself liable to the law!"

"Go 'long!" said Aaron, whipping his nag.

"I — I am suffering excruciating agonies with my head on this bolt!" groaned the man of stone, softening. "I entreat you, Aaron Burble! I implore you! You yourself have a child," — and he burst into tears; water flowing from the rock, — stricken, not by Moses, but by Aaron.

The inquest was in session at the tavern. Several witnesses had already been called; among them Guy, who had identified his father's pistol. Two stout Germans came and testified to having paid Pelt gold. And now Aaron brought in his special witnesses, — Biddikin, ghastly, grim, marked by the filial fist; and round-eyed little Job.

The doctor was sworn; but nothing could be got out of him. He was ignorant; he was stubborn; he was mum. His feelings as a parent and his rights as a citizen had been outraged; and, when he had said that, he closed his ashen lips.

He was accordingly set aside for the time, and Job was put upon the stand, — meek, bewildered, softly-smiling, bottle-shaped little Job; and the inquisitorial corkscrew was applied, and the truth gently drawn.

"Did you ever see this pistol?"

"Y-a-a-s! Mad had it."

"Job, Job!" cried Biddikin, "tell the truth! You never saw *that* pistol, did you? The truth, Job!"

“N-o-o-o!” falters the terrified Job.

Biddikin is sternly ordered to remain silent, while the examination proceeds. The old man utters groan after groan as the little witness relates what he knows. Guy leans his head heavily upon his hand; and Mad, listening in the crowd outside the window, feels his soul shrivel and wither within him like a leaf touched by fire.

There was a whispered consultation: then Aaron made his way to the door, and came round by the window where he had seen Mad a minute before; searching through the crowd.

But already Mad was gone.

Seized by an impulse of fear, he walked swiftly up the road, and leaped into a field. There, skulking behind some bushes, he looked back, and saw Aaron whipping after him in his wagon. No doubt he had been observed. His present retreat was unsafe. Panic-struck, he ran first to Jehiel's orchard; then to the house; then up the stairs, and into Lucy's room.

The widow was absent at the moment. Lucy was alone with her babe. She started up in affright, and confronted her wild visitor. Mad shut the door behind him, and whispered hoarsely, his eyes redly gleaming, —

“Hide me, for God's sake!”

“Hide you?” repeated the terrified girl in an agony of apprehension.

“Guy is just as much in it as I am!” he hurriedly exclaimed. “If they get me, they'll get him. — Damnation!”

the buggy has stopped! Show me a hiding-place!" he added menacingly.

"O Heaven!" she cried wildly, "what can I do?" She thought of the gold. "You should not have come here! Go, go! — you endanger all!"

"That's what I do!" he replied with a ferocious laugh: "If I hang, all hang!"

-Heavy footsteps were heard below.

Mad drew his knife. "Blood will run first, though! Let him come!"

Aaron was already on the stairs. Luey had but an instant to act. Hide the fugitive she could not; yet save him she would, for Guy's sake. She hushed him with a gesture. "Here!" she whispered, springing to a window, and flinging it open. A branch of the butternut-tree that shaded it was within reach. Mad thrust his open knife into his pocket, grasped the limb, dragged himself through the casement, and slipped down the trunk.

Aaron entered the room just in season to see him dash across the brook into the woods.

XL.

THE COMING MAN AND HIS DISCIPLE.



IGH on a throne of mountain rubbish, Murk exalted sat. At his feet yawned the craggy mouth and insatiable gullet of that everlasting bore, the shaft. He was alone, and heavily contemplative ; the miners, at news of the murder and the loss of the gold with which they were to be paid, having deserted in a body, strangely regardless of the interests of humanity hinging on the work. Only Jack the crow remained, perched on the idle windlass, and mournfully inquiring ever and anon, —

“Where’s Biddikin?”

To which corvine observation the philanthropist deigned no response. What was he meditating, sitting there with his nose between his knees, gazing so steadily? Was he rapt in humanitarian yearnings; lost in that love so universal and tender, that it would not suffer him to harm even a mosquito, — unless it was “necessary”? Was he contemplating his messiahship, and dreaming of future followers? or was it one of those moments of doubt to which even the greatest are sub-

ject? for the face of him was troubled. Under his eye, in a chink of the embankment, waved a little glimmering cobweb, woven there by a small brown spider, to whose shrewd needle-point wit the work no doubt appeared prodigious, — the one great affair of the universe. And did the human spider perceive that this was but a type of his own fine-spun theories; that, though he schemed to take in the whole world in his philosophy, he had spanned but the narrowest crevice, and entangled but one or two poor flies, while the deep solid facts of life lay all around him, mountainous, unfathomed, and untouched?

No, ye scoffers! Murk saw no such thing. Himself the great pivotal mind of the age, the patriarch of the new divine order, the coming man that had come, — this he saw most fixedly; and still believed that his messiahship was just the thing for this planet, if it could only be made to work. At the same time, he perceived that difficulties were growing complicated and dangerous. And so the face of him was troubled; and at the sound of footsteps he gave, it must be owned, an unphilosophical start.

Peace, O patriarch! Steady, pivotal mind! Fear not, Moses Murk! The comer is thy fly, thy disciple; in other words, Mad Biddikin.

“What tidings, my son?”

From thridding the woods, from scaling the mountain-side, fiery-hot and panting, the youth flung himself down under the embankment.

“Is he coming?” he whispered, turning up his glittering inflamed eyes at the philanthropist.

Murk, from his throne of rubbish, could discern no one; and Mad, recovering breath and audacity, related in few rapid words his adventure, and what led to it.

“Now, where’s your spirits, your powers?” he scoffed. “They’ve got us into a scrape: now let’s see ’em get us out of it!”

The soul of Moses seemed to sweat inwardly for a minute with strong perturbation. Then the old fishy shine came into his eyes, and the dull self-satisfied gleam into his face.

“My son, we did what seemed necessary. Whatever is, is right: let that comfort you. We shall be taken care of, my son.”

“Yes, with a vengeance!” blasphemed the disciple. “I only wish we had that gold, and could once get clear of this cussid town.”

“That might be well,” said the philanthropist after another soul-sweating moment. “When Moses had smitten the Egyptian, he fled to Midian. I see in those events my own history and mission shadowed forth very remarkably. I am clearly the Moses of the latter-day Exodus, to lead the world out of spiritual bondage. I, too, was an adopted son; and it was with peculiar significance that the name was given to me. MO-YSES, — ‘drawn out of the water.’ I fell into a tub of suds when I was beginning to creep, and was drawn out. Though I think there is an interior meaning to that: the wa-

ters signify worldliness, from which I was early rescued, and set apart for this work. Swedenborg corroborates!" — with a sallow smile, wagging his fist.

"Swedenborg be blowed!" said the disciple. "I don't believe you understand yourself what you're talking about. But I know one thing: if you are Moses, there's an Aaron coming!" — Mad's excitement bursting out into savage hilarity. "'Says Aaron to Moses, Le's cut off our noses; says Moses to Aaron, It's the fashion to wear 'em!' But I swear, if you want to keep in fashion, and carry that extensive fly-roost round with you much longer, you'd better think of something else just now, and shut down on that humbugging cheap talk! — See any one?" and Mad cautiously got up from the rubbish where he had been whitening his flanks, and peered over the embankments.

"It seemed advisable to intrust the chief with the gold, — for I had not yet assumed my authority, — though it might be well if we had it now," said the philanthropist. "Cannot we conceal ourselves until the means of flight present themselves?"

"There never was such a chance to hide," said Mad. "I can take you to places down among the rocks where we could live weeks, and never get found, if we only had plenty of fodder."

"Indeed, fodder, as you playfully term it, will be highly necessary," observed the philanthropist; for he had not dined, and the sun was going down upon his fast.

“We can slip into the house to-night, and get some. I wish I knew where that constable is! Can you run, Moses?”

“I have not remarkably gifted legs,” Murk admitted.

“But there’s one thing: if he comes alone, we’ll be enough for him. We’ll chuck him into this hole, and pile in rocks on to him.”

“I am impressed that we had better be looking for the places of refuge you tell of.”

“Well, then, come!” — and, after some circumspection, Mad hurried the philanthropist down the ledges to the crags. They stealthily neared the verge to avoid discovery from below, and looked over the frightful precipice. “There, down in them rocks,” said Mad. “Foller me.”

“But will it be possible to descend here?” asked Murk, somewhat aghast at the prospect.

“We must! We can slide down on our bellies behind the crag till we get into the bushes there; then we can’t be seen, above or below. Do as I do. Feet first.”

“Hold!” said the philanthropist, “There is surely a brother!”

“Where?” — and Mad put his chin over the angle of the crag to look, and discovered far down, by the blocks of the ice-bed, a form which even at that distance could be identified by a keen eyesight.

The “brother” was Aaron Burble.

“He’s looking for me!” Mad muttered. “If I had a Minie rifle, I’d wipe him out!”

“It may be necessary to advance him to higher spheres,” was the dry response ; which, in the patriarch’s dialect, meant precisely what Mad’s slang meant ; namely, to make Rhoda Burble a widow.

“There ! — he’s going into the timber ! Think he’s seen us ?”

“Let us withdraw,” said Murk. “Without especial aid from my divine guides, I could never descend the precipice alive. I am impressed to return to the shaft. There I will open up to you some ideas on the subject of our dilemma, which will be edifying.”

And, hastening back over the ledges on his not remarkably gifted legs, he sat down by the windlass, and unfolded his plan of the campaign, which we will not stop to consider now.

“I perceive,” he then added, “that all that has been done thus far has been needful. The chief was to be displaced : and it may be necessary that he should suffer a change at the hands of the law ;” i. e., be hung. “How our work here is to be resumed, and the treasure secured, I do not yet see clearly ; but the way will doubtless be opened.” And he thoughtfully rubbed the Mosaic nose.

“Gammon !” said Mad in great disgust. “I tell ye, this thing is played out. About the other business : I’ll do it, if you say so.”

“It seems to me best ; for I can never trust my limbs over the precipice,” replied Moses.

And they proceeded to put his plan into execution.

XLI.

THE SEARCH-WARRANT.



LUCEY had scarcely recovered from the agitation of dismissing Mad through the window, and of meeting Aaron ; she had just soothed her babe into rest, and lain down beside it on the bed, — when Mrs. Hedge came rushing in.

“ Lucey ! Lucey ! ”

The anxious-hearted girl was on her feet in an instant ; and her looks asked the question which her lips failed to pronounce, — What had happened ?

“ They have come to search the house ! ”

Who ? The sheriff and two others. For what ? Hannah did not know ; and she had no time for conjecture, for already they were mounting the stairs.

But Lucey knew too well ; and for a moment her very soul was darkened. Then as suddenly a vivid light flashed upon her, — the light of love and duty. The one thought, the one supreme resolve, TO SAVE THE FATHER OF HER CHILD, swept into oblivion every thing else, — pain, feebleness, fear, the

memory of irreparable wrongs, — and concentrated all her strength, all the faculties of body and soul, in the swift act of the instant.

“Keep them — one minute! Go!” She thrust Mrs. Hedge from the room, and shut the door.

And now, while Mrs. Hedge is speaking to the officers, as only a woman can speak, of the sick, the very sick babe, and of the suffering young mother, and entreating them to discharge their duty with all gentleness, we may glance at the cause of the search.

It was after Job had given his evidence, and Mad had escaped, that the heart of Biddikin succumbed under the pressure of circumstances. Then, placed once more under oath, — confessing a little, and trying to conceal more, — in his distraction, seeing no other way to save his son, he turned, and denounced Guy.

“HE led my son into it; HE used the pistol; HE took the gold! THERE THE MURDERER STANDS!”

It is not probable that Guy had up to this time escaped suspicion. His testimony with regard to the pistol had not been very satisfactory; and Abner's statements concerning Pelt's business on the mountain, and Guy's anxiety about it, had doubtless prepared many for this announcement. Guy must certainly have been prepared; for, while others appeared startled and amazed, he exhibited no surprise, but with his countenance perhaps a shade paler than before, his lips slightly curling, he threw at Biddikin a look in which indignation and stern warning were blended with contempt.

“He who keeps a private grave in the woods should beware whom he accuses!”

In the midst of the stir and sensation, these low, level words went straight into Biddikin's soul. Few besides heard, and none else understood them; but to him they were a thunderbolt. A chalky pallor whitened his cheeks: he gasped, he gave one ghastly look, and tumbled down in a swoon. He was carried out.

But already the seed was sown. Guy's connection with Lucy and with spiritualism had made him many enemies: some were of the jury. The opportunity was eagerly seized, and he was called again upon the stand. He glanced around; he saw written in harsh faces a determination to press him hard; and his resolution was taken.

“I decline,” said he, “to answer any more questions.”

What was to be done? It had appeared in the physician's evidence that Guy had called him the evening before to visit Lucy's babe: hence it was inferred that he had seen her after the murder. It was not deemed expedient, however, to summon her before the jury until a search had been made for the gold. The sheriff was accordingly despatched with instructions to search Jehiel's house, Biddikin's, and Guy's quarters at home. In the mean time, Abner was recalled, — Abner, who was destined now to have all the details of his infidelity to Elphaz, and his conferences with Guy on the subject of the land-sale, drawn, as it were, through the very pores of his skin.

Jehiel's house was the first one visited by the search-warrant. The sheriff, accompanied by an assistant, entered Lucy's room. She had rightly divined their business; and there she sat, pale, silent, drooping over her babe, which she held upon her breast.

At sight of her, the officer's heart was touched. He spoke to her kindly; for he remembered that he, too, had watched by a dying infant, and witnessed a mother's affliction in his own home.

Lucy scarcely seemed to observe the intruders. She betrayed not the least interest in the search, nor once lifted her eyes, but kept them fixed upon her baby's face, with a look of love and anguish pitiful to see.

"I'll just trouble you to rise," said the sheriff.

She stood upon her feet, holding the babe to her breast; then sat down again, hushing and soothing it as it began to worry.

The search was thorough in both the rooms; but it was conducted in silence. No gold was to be found.

The officers, apparently not much disappointed, nor sorry to withdraw, took their leave. She heard them going down the stairs; but she had hardly dared to congratulate herself that it was all over, when she heard footsteps again approaching. The door had been left open. She was trembling with apprehensions of discovery which she had not felt before, when a voice spoke, — a hesitating voice, —

"Is ma here?"

“O Archy! come in!” and the genius sidled into the room. “Shut the door!” He obeyed, and stood twisting his hat-brim, and looking bashfully at the floor, remarking that he didn’t see ma nowheres. “She went home at noon,” said Lucy. “She promised to come again this evening. But, Archy, are you sure I can trust you?”

“Trust me!” echoed the genius, raising his eyes almost reproachfully. “You know, if there’s any thing I can do for ye” —

“Yes, I do know; and I will trust you with a secret that I wouldn’t have another person in the world suspect. Come to me to-night, after dark. Tell your mother I shall not want her till to-morrow. O Archy, you can help me so much! for there is no one else I dare to ask.”

Archy promised to do faithfully all she wished. Then he was going; but she detained him with a question which she dreaded to speak, and trembled to have answered, — the news about Guy. Archy scratched his head, and tried to soften his words before uttering them; but her burning eye was on him. She would have the truth, the bare truth, at once.

“Wal, ye see, they had up Doctor Biddikin, — old fool, don’t know beans!” premised Archy. “He says Guy done it, — you know what, — and took the gold. After that, Guy was a little riled, I guess; for he wouldn’t answer a single question. They’ve got Abner swearing now; and he’s telling all he knows, and more too, — how Guy said he didn’t vally Pelt’s life, but meant to have the gold anyhow.”

Lucy heard unflinchingly. "And Guy?"

"Wal, all they want to prove now is that he had the gold. That they can't do, of course," said Archy. "But — they say — he'll have to — go to jail."

Lucy suppressed a cry, and clasped closer still her babe, bending her cheek down to it with a show of dumb affliction which quite overmastered Archy's manhood.

Then, when he was gone, and the door was shut, her face slowly upturned to heaven with a mute prayer; the arms that held the babe relaxed; and, the folds of the little blanket parting, something rolled out, and dropped with a dull chink upon the floor. It was the bag of gold.

XLII.

THE GOLD.



O the afternoon passes ; and once more it is evening. And now once more Guy is riding southward along the valley to the hum of wheels. Again old Mount Solomon lies before him, misty and golden in the sunset and purple distance. The pond that mirrored it so gloriously on another memorable time when he rode that way—the pond is ruffled to-night. Yet the evening is calm, oh ! very cool and calm, after the day's feverish business ; and the gracefully skimming barn-swallows are abroad, and the chipping chimney-swallows clip with their scissor-like wings the silken air.

“ Stop a moment ! ” says Guy. He hearkens to the sparrow's evening song : it recalls unspeakable memories, stirring by its very joyousness the depths of his sad soul.

“ Go on ! ” he says to his companion : for he is not now riding alone, as when he hastened, flushed with love, to Lucy's arms ; but the sheriff is at his side.

Again the lights twinkle in the village at his arrival, and the hotel-windows shed a hospitable glow; but his journey takes him farther still to-night, — under the vast gloomy brow of Mount Solomon, to a structure massive-walled, with windows iron-barred. Here we leave him to his reflections.

At the appointed time, Archy came to Lucy's room, bringing a basket.

“Dandelions,” said he; “some ’t I dug. Ma said they’d be good for ye this time o’ year. B’sides, I thought, if any body axed me what I come for, I could say ’twas to bring ye some greens.” And he presented his verdant offering. “I’ll git ye some reel nice cowslops some day, ’f ye like ’em.”

“O Archy! I thank God for you to-night!” said Lucy. “I am glad you brought the basket. Hark! — here comes Mrs. Hedge!”

Hannah entered with a pan to put the greens in, and some rhubarb-stalks to send back in the basket.

“Ma *said* your pie-plant had got along,” remarked the genius: “and she’ll be reel glad o’ some, I know; for our’n hain’t hardly started yet. But you mustn’t rob yourselves, you know.”

Mrs. Hedge answered in good neighborly sort. The stalks were placed in the basket, and she retired with the greens.

Then, while Archy leaned awkwardly on a chair, Lucy came before him, pale, slender, worn-looking, but spirited,

and as beautiful in his simple eyes as in the days when, for the love of her, he wished that he was dead.

“ Archy, I am going to commit a dangerous trust into your hands. As you value my life, be true to me ! ” And she unrolled a napkin.

“ Why, what’s this ? — so all-fired heavy ; though I didn’t mean to swear ! ” said the wondering genius.

“ Hush ! nobody must hear. It is the gold, Archy ! ”

Archy recoiled horror-struck. But Lucy placed it in the basket, covered it with the rhubarb, and directed him how to dispose of it.

“ I don’t feel exactly right about having any thing to do with *that* money ! ” he stammered.

“ Archy, you promised to help me. It is terrible to me. I must get rid of it. Go across the fields : nobody will see you, if you are careful. I could do it myself ; and I will, if you are afraid.”

The genius hung his head, weighing the basket in his hand, and the doubts in his mind. “ Wal, I’ll go — for you,” he said. And promising, in case of the successful performance of his mission, to return that way, and whistle under her window, he set out, lighted down the stairs by Lucy holding a lamp at the top.

It was a clear, moonless night when Archy crept out from under the door-yard trees, and stood with a beating heart beneath the constellations, — Bootes guiding his starry hounds, and the diamonds brightening in Berenice’s dusky

hair. And all was still ; and with a touch of the old poignant grief, as he remembered how once before, by night, he went in Lucy's service to the house of his rival, he crossed the road, climbed the fence, and glided across the fields.

He had come in sight of the Lombardy poplars, and was going round by the orchard, eagerly looking and listening, thankful that the dogs had been sold, — thinking all the time of the danger to his neck should the gold be found in his possession, or of the danger to Lucy should he be put into jail and her secret wrung from him, — when he discovered, just a few yards off, another figure like his own skulking along the ground.

Or was it only a shape of the imagination, which often played him such tricks, especially in lonesome places at night ? For after experiencing a terrible fright, and squatting on the ground for at least ten minutes, he could see nothing but the outlines and dim objects of the earth, and hear nothing but his own heart thump ; and, when he ventured to get upon his feet again, the thing had vanished, and he was alone.

He timidly advanced. The orchard was near : he came up to it ; and, having looked all up and down among the silent trees, he softly laid a leg over the wall. He was preparing to put the other over, lifting his basket carefully, and moving in constant fear of making the stones tumble, when up jumped a man before him, upon whose back he had almost set his foot.

“ O Lord ! ” gasped Archy ; and the way the stones rolled and rattled beneath him was astonishing.

“Hello!” said the man; and a hand caught him by the leg as he struggled to escape.

“What you want of me?” cried the genius, holding the basket with its dreadful contents as far off as he could. “Le’ me go!”

“Be still, or I’ll choke ye!” muttered the man. “Do ye know where Guy is?”

“Yes: he’s gone to jail,” said Archy’s trembling voice.

“The deuse he has! And old Aaron — whereabouts is he?”

“He’s after you: I thought he was. Come, le’ me go, Mad Biddikin!”

“Look here, Archy. What ye got in the basket?”

“I’ve got some pie-plants, — nothing for you.”

“I wish they was cooked!” said Mad. “Hain’t ye got any thing good to eat? Le’ me see.”

“Le’ go o’ me! I’ll screech!” For Archy, though terrified, remembering that one murder had been done for the sake of that same gold, was determined to be faithful to his trust, even if he had to fight.

“Wal, you needn’t be so skittish!” said Mad. “See here: I want you to go to the village, and buy me some things; will ye?”

“Give me some money, then.”

“I’m dead-broke. That’s what I want to see Guy for. Archy,” Mad whispered, “I know who has got that gold!”

“I should think you ought to know!” stammered Archy.

“Guy left it with Lucy, I’ll bet a thousand dollars. She’s got it now.”

“I don’t believe it! She hain’t got it any more’n I have!”

“That’s all you know about it. I’ll tell ye: get your mother to go over there to-morrow, and coax it out of her, or manage to steal it; and I’ll give you fifty dollars, — yes, a hundred, — as much as you want!”

“I know Luey hain’t got it,” replied Archy; “for the sberiff was there to-day, and had a sarch.”

“And couldn’t find it?” said Mad, surprised. “And Guy’s gone to jail! — ’St! there’s a buggy! I’m going to see if it stops to the colonel’s: it may be Aaron. Wait till I come back.”

Mad darted along by the wall towards the road, wonderfully to the relief of Archy, who did *not* wait till he came back, but ran off in the opposite direction, and hid in some sumacs. There he lay panting, when Mad returned, and softly called his name, and walked by within a rod of him, and disappeared in the darkness. That was the last he saw of him; and venturing at length out of his retreat, thanking his stars that he had kept safe the contents of his basket, — the idea never once occurring to him that all that gold might now be his, if he did but choose, — honest, single-hearted, cautious, — he groped through the obscure orchard on his way.

The colonel is alone in his library. A shaded lamp burns dimly. Dimly from the wall look down the portraits of the young mother and the fair-haired boy upon her knee; and his thoughts are of them, — there in the silence, with his head sunk upon his breast.

The window is open; and within the window the cactus hangs, — monstrous crawling creature, with its long feelers hanging like a fringe of snakes all round the suspended vase. It is going to blossom soon. And the colonel remembers again the old witch-woman and her prediction, already twice fulfilled, — that the flowering of this cactus will always mark some great change in the Bannington Family.

He looks up at the portraits, and, with feelings that carry him back twenty years, regards the noble and sweet face of the mother, and the bright, brave face of the boy, — the boy they so idolized then; who was their pride afterwards in his promising youth; the son whom she died blessing, committing him to his paternal care; the son from whom he has been for near a twelvemonth unnaturally estranged; over whose neck he now sees the noose of the gallows dangle, — and the cactus about to bloom!

Again his head sinks upon his chest in mute agony; for how had he fulfilled that mother's charge! The stillness within the room, and the stillness without in the dark night, is utter and ominous; when suddenly the cactus shakes its snaky fringes, and something falls with a dull elash.

The colonel starts as if a bomb-shell had burst. He looks

round, but can see nothing unusual ; and all is still again. A superstitious fear seizes him ; for, truth to tell, all his professed scepticism and hatred of the supernatural arise from a secret belief and terror. He looks, and sees the cactus fringes stirring still, — horribly stirring, like live snakes. He gets hold of his bell, and jingles it violently. Rhoda comes running.

Had she heard any thing? No, she avers, and wonders ; and he sets her to searching the room.

“ My goodness sakes ! what’s this ? ” And she fishes a heavy-freighted little bundle from under his chair.

He seizes it with shaking hands. Some missile, doubtless, directed against his life. “ There’ll be a mania for murdering folks now ! Shut the window, — the blinds ! and run out and see who fired it ! ”

“ I’m afraid ! ” said honest-spoken Rhoda. “ I’m dreadfully scaret ! What is it ? ”

A most extraordinary engine of mischief, tied up in a bag ; and the colonel is a little shy of loosening the strings. But, concluding that it is entirely the work of human hands, — no spirit hocus-pocus about it, as he remarks to Rhoda, — he summons pluck, cuts the knots, and spills out an astonishing stream of gold.

Archy had done his errand ; and now, fearful of pursuers, he scoots away, shadowy and swift, back through the orchard, and into the open field, where he pauses to listen and take breath, in the midst of a profound night-silence and dimly

visible shapes, — alone, beneath the glittering constellations.

Soon Lucy, after long anxiously waiting, hears the preconcerted whistle under her window, and thanks God, kneeling beside her bed.

Then Archy hurries home to his mother. And so the day ends, and sleep comes to whom it will. Blessed sleep! that visits even Lucy this night; even Guy, in his new, strange lodgings; and old Ben Arlyn, after tossing all day with fever in Mrs. Pinworth's house. Blessed, blessed sleep!

XLIII.

JACK THE CROW.



HE first splendors of the east were kindling over the mountain when Aaron Burble went up in the dewy shadow, with two fugitives and the day before him.

It was deemed of the highest importance that Mr. Murk and Mad should be produced at the inquest; and the constable, who had observed their movements on the crag the previous afternoon, and shrewdly guessed their purpose, had formed a plan for their capture. Accordingly, while two deputies were sent to lie in ambush at the ice-bed, and watch the rocks, he proceeded alone to the summit.

Steaming and blowing up the long, steep path from Biddikin's house, in the fresh morning prime, went the burly constable, regardless of the glory flushing the tree-tops above him, of the lispig rills drizzling in gleam and shade down the glistening rock-sides, of the delicate mosses and tender young leaves of the saplings; breathing the gracious mountain air in a most ox-like, unpoetical fashion; intent, flesh and spirit, on

his errand of force. For Aaron was a type of those worthy, solid men, who, if they receive any unconscious influx of beauty and divine life from God's overflowing urn, straightway convert it into muscle and fat, and go contentedly grunting.

He reached the summit, and stood upon the rocks, the bald and wrinkled rocks, upturned to heaven like the brows of sad old Saturn scowling at lost Olympus.

"The idea of spending a man's life digging for treasure in such a place as this!" he said, wiping his sweaty face, with a satirical chuckle, as he peeped down into the dismal empty shaft. "Lord, what fools some folks be!"

And how wise, O Aaron! are some of the rest of us, in our own conceit! As if, justly considered, you, now, were spending your days any more profitably than the fanatics you jeer at. Is enthusiasm so much more despicable than dull animality? Are you, solid, worthy man, boring no useless holes in the stony crust of worldliness, which contains all the treasure you have any conception of? and may not you, also, awake some judgment-day morning to find that your persistent and toilsome digging has been all illusion? Come, let us stop laughing at fools till we have got over our folly.

The rope is wound upon the windlass, the tub lies upset on the stones; and Aaron concludes that the fugitives cannot be in the shaft, which one can neither get into nor out of, as it looks, without a helping hand at the spokes. So he turns his back upon the summit, and advances towards the cliff,—to

the spot where he yesterday saw Mad make a motion to descend. On that brink he rests. Nothing is visible below but the still, shadowy precipice, the dizzy slant of mountain wall, the bushy thickets, the cataracts of stones, untouched by the morning sun; the terrible desolation unrelieved by the presence of any living thing.

Aaron shrugs his thick shoulders at the view. Suppose the fugitives to be anywhere in that rocky wilderness which his eye can sweep, how are they ever to be detected? He remembers Mad's brag at the bear-hunt, — how he could hide among those rocks where no officer could find him out, — and concludes that the rascal was not far wrong. However, an effort must be made; and after waiting half an hour to see if any game will stir, and perceiving only a single crow cawing far down under the crags, he resolves to beat the bushes towards his ambushed men.

There was an angle of the cliff, which, like a stupendous jagged nose, bent down into a dense hemlock tangle that grew as a whisker on the face of the precipice. This was the spot where the philanthropist concluded not to risk his valuable limbs: but this way Aaron will descend, in the hope of starting his game; and he climbs over the cliff.

In the hush and refulgence of the early day, behold a fly on the mountain's nose! They in the village may, with unassisted vision, discern it crawling slowly; and from valley and from peak, within a compass of a dozen miles, any hunter with his glass may examine the curious creature. A speck, a man!

Viewed from far, it is astonishing; but to us, bringing the object near as we please with the telescope of the imagination, it is also a little ludicrous. Broad stern foremost, a spectacle to the blue universe; the legs blindly feeling their way down the crag, making short steps between the sublime and the ridiculous; the hands grasping at any crevice or shrub; the abdominal buttons scratching the rocks; stopping to sneeze, at that appalling altitude, — thus gropes the burly constable.

He dips into shadow, and at length drops into the thickets. There his corpulence has to be squeezed through excruciatingly tight places, under and between the spiked hemlocks. He scratches himself; he prepares the way for one or several of Rhoda's excellent patches on his nether garments; he loses his hat, and gets caught *à l'Absalom*; till at last, hot and blown, he reaches a cataract of stones, which spreads downward to larger rocks below.

All this time he has proceeded with the eye of vigilance. And he now carefully observes the conduct of that only living thing besides himself discernible under the cliff; to wit, the crow. It comes flapping down close to his head, as crows are not wont to do; cawing carnivorously, as if with a view to the many merry breakfasts he might enjoy if fat Aaron would but have the kindness to get a tumble, and remain sticking there on the crag, in some spot convenient for picking stray bones.

There is a chance of the bird's reasonable desire being gratified; for Aaron has hardly set his foot on the stones,

treading along the stationary stream, when it begins to move, to slide, to crush, to grind, to pour and rattle down, sweeping him swiftly towards shipwreck. He manages, however, to anchor himself by a sapling, and get out of the thundering current, with only a few bruises on his beam-ends.

If Mad had been anywhere crouched among the rocks below on which the stony torrent broke, he must have thought the everlasting smash was come. Over those rocks Aaron was soon elampering. Steep the pile, and dangerous. Now and then a heavy fragment became loosened, and went bounding down, crashing and splitting, and raising a smoke and smell disagreeably suggestive of pulverization, — a smoke and smell as of Tartarus itself, into which Aaron at times seemed about to be precipitated headlong. *DIFFICILIS descensus Averni.*

Often finding himself unexpectedly in a sitting posture, he took occasion to gather breath, wipe away sweat, and reflect upon the wonders of geology. Also to watch the movements of the crow; for Aaron had taken it into his head that the bird's extraordinary conduct had a meaning, and that, well considered, something interesting might come of it. Usually, after flapping and cawing around him saucily for a minute or two, it flew away and disappeared, and always in one direction. That way Aaron was now following, as fast and as straight as the difficulties of the place would permit. At last, only a screen of blueberry-bushes separated him from the field of enormous brown blocks piled about the ice-bed. The bushes he passed, and sat down in the edge of them.

“So far, so good, Master Jack,” quoth the constable.

“Blast your eyes!” quoth Jack, perching on a point of rock.

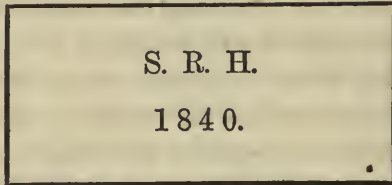
Then all was still: only a pewee piped its long-drawn, plaintive notes among the poplars below, — a sound singularly sweet and solitary in that desolate spot. Even Aaron could not be insensible to it. But seated there among the mountainous ruins, with the dizzy crags soaring above him, and the morning wasting its glory on the awful wilderness around, that one bird’s slender plaint gave him a sting of pensive loneliness which his bosom never forgot; so that, years afterwards, he could never hear a pewee in the woods but his soul was carried back to that morning and that place, to a vision of rocks, and a sentiment of desolation. For in rudest breasts there is a secret sense of poetry and feeling; and not seldom, when the grand and salient points of nature and life have failed to penetrate it, some little stream of tenderness will steal in from a flower’s tint, a woman’s heart, or the smile and voice of a child.

It is questionable if Jack, too, did not feel the influence of that song, far more solitary than his own wild cawing among the crags. For some minutes he stood quite still, his glossy feathers presenting a fine contrast to the brown lichens that incrustated the rocks; then he flapped his wings, and, circling in the air about Aaron’s head, settled again upon a rock farther off.

“Laugh, Jack! Ha, ha! Mad’s come homo!” And he

fluttered, balancing himself, and bobbing his head in a very knowing manner.

Again and again he repeated this manœuvre ; circling each time, Aaron noticed, around a certain massive block, easily identified, if not by its peculiar shape, then by the initials and date carved upon it by some tourist years ago : —



Characters scraggy and huge, legible afar off.

Aaron made a signal ; and presently might have been seen two men issuing from the ambush below. They scrambled up over the rocks to his side.

“ Any discoveries ? ” he whispered.

They had made none : had he ? Aaron laughed, and pointed at the rock, — “ S. R. H. ”

“ That means, *Somewhere Round Here*. Look at that, now ! ”

Just then, Jack dropped down beside the rock, and suspended himself on hovering wings, vivaciously chattering.

“ Somebody there, ” said Aaron. “ That’s Biddikin’s tame crow. ” And, as he spoke, a movement of the bird, darting back with a scream as if struck at from below, appeared to confirm the conjecture. “ We’ll see what he has got there, anyhow. ”

To cut off the fugitives, in case they should be there and attempt to escape, the constable sent his men round beyond the rock, one on each side, while he carefully advanced in front. Arrived near enough to command a view of the spot over which Jack had hovered, he sat down again, and waited. This seemed to excite Jack, who came once more, and cawed and flapped, until out from among the rocks glided a thing like a stick or a snake's head, threatening him; when he flew away a short distance and alighted, shaking out his feathers, rubbing his beak, and sullenly croaking. Aaron saw the stick, and signalized his companions confidently.

There was an angular passage down between the loosely tumbled masses, large enough to admit the body of a man; but, when the officers arrived, there was nothing to indicate that any one had ever entered it. To what cavernous recesses it led could not be known. The deputies did not believe that the fugitives could be there; and when Aaron, getting down on his face, looked in, and saw only a narrow, dismal cavity, he began to fear, that, after all, he was mistaken. The stick might have been a snake.

"Mad, my boy," said he, "we want you. Come out!"

The hollow ring of the rocks, the silence that followed, and the darkness of the den, were discouraging. Aaron got up, and one of the others, a more slender man, put his head into the passage. Suddenly he drew back, put up his hand, and whispered excitedly under his tumbled hair, —

"I see a leg!"

“’Sh!” said Aaron, silencing him. Then putting his face once more at the opening, and speaking to be heard within, — “I tell you, boys, we can fire into the hole; and, if there’s anybody there, we shall know it.”

The click of a pistol-lock followed; and Burble was ready to fire, when a loud roaring in the den prevented him.

“Who’s there?” he asked.

“It’s me; and don’t you shoot!” cried Mad from the depths of the den.

“Come out, then!”

“Never, alive!”

“Then you’ll come out dead, and mighty quick; for I’ve orders to take you, dead or alive!”

At that the pluck of Madison altogether failed him; and he crept out, trembling and white, under the muzzle of Aaron’s pistol.

“I’m sorry for you, Mad; and it seems almost too bad, don’t it? I never could have found you, I confess. Jack’s the best constable of the lot!”

“Jack,” said Mad, pallid with fear and rage, “come here!”

“Laugh, Jack!” said the crow, perching on his arm. “Ha, ha!”

Then Mad took him, and cursed him, giving his neck a sudden wrench, and dashed him upon the rock. Jack kicked a little, and was dead.

XLIV.

LITTLE AGNES.



HAT night the coroner's jury found their verdict, helped thereto chiefly by the testimony of Abner and Job.

Mad, being put under oath, contradicted himself so confusedly, that he had been unceremoniously set aside, and committed to jail. Mr. Murk had not yet been arrested, though the officers were still out for him. Guy — we know where he was already. These three were charged, in the verdict, with the murder.

Doctor Biddikin was kept in custody for a day or two; but his wits seemed to have deserted him. Since he was carried out of the court, he had not spoken a word; and he was finally discharged.

And Pelt was put under the daisies; and Guy, not so happy, lay in prison. A murderer? Spirit communion, love of humanity, world's reform, — and was this the fruit?

So said the ministers who preached about it; so said the editors who wrote about it. And it was curious now to note

how many oracular old smokers and sagacious grandmothers had, from the first, foreseen how it would be.

But there was one who had foreseen much, and who uttered now no vain "I told you so!" — who accused no one, and complained not, though the cup of bitterness was at her lips.

Only once, when she had been watching long, thinking of her dying babe, of its father in jail, and of the still more cruel bars of error and wrong that kept him from her, she cried out with irrepressible anguish, —

"You, Mrs. Brandle, believe in God; you believe in ministering angels: but are there not wicked spirits that come to destroy?"

"No doubt," said the widow, "there's some such. It's with sperits, I s'pose, as 'tis with men and women: there's all sorts. But though there may be some that's bad, there's others more bright and glorious than we can consave of or imagine. It depends on ourselves which shall come to us. When they make us happier and better, we may be sure they are good sperits." And the widow's face shone like a sign of the heavenly influences.

But Guy was not a bad man: why had he been so misled? Lucy implored to know.

"We can't expect always to see into the ways of Providence," the widow continued. "And it don't do to have too narrer idees on any subject. It's with idees as 'tis with cloth: wide will wear, but narrer will tear. And one thing,

my child, is sartin : God is over all. He permits what seems to us evil, for the final good that's to come on't."

"Oh, if I could only believe that as I used to think I believed it!" said Luey.

"I know," — the widow's voice quivered, — "it's a great deal easier to talk than 'tis to live up to our faith when the time o' trial comes. But I've had afflictions myself; and I speak what I've larnt. If we are prayerful and true, no suffering can happen to us that ain't for our good. My dear child," she added, her eyes glimmering with tears, "I want you to realize this, and bear it in mind; for you'll need it to support ye in what you've got to go through. And, in the midst of all, I want you to remember you've got at least one airthly friend that never'll desart ye!" She wiped her eyes. "There now, dear, let me take her; and you lie down, and see if you can't ketch a little nap."

Under the widow's soothing influence, and with Mrs. Hedge's presence and sympathy, Luey found strength to pass through the days when Guy was in prison, and her father was wasting with fever and evil counsel in her aunt's house, and little Agnes was fading away. Worn out with grief and watching, she would sleep, or seem to sleep; for often she would lie awake for hours with closed eyes, never stirring, scarcely breathing even, except that, at long intervals, a deep sigh would heave.

What were her thoughts at such times? Over what endless gloomy flood hovered the tempest-driven dove of her

soul, finding no rest for its weary wings, no branch of hope?

One day, when she lay thus, Mrs. Brandle uttered a stifled cry. She had been holding the living babe upon her lap, when suddenly she discovered that no living babe was there. One of God's glorious miracles had been wrought in mystery and silence. There lay the exquisite mould of clay; but the spirit that had given it form and being was gone. Agnes was among the angels.

"Blessed be the name of the Lord!" murmured the widow.

Lucy rose, and knelt down by the pale corpse. She uttered first one piercing wail, wringing her hands. Then she calmed herself, gazed at it in silence with unutterable woe and anguish, kissed it many times passionately, and said, —

"It is better so! — better so, my darling! God grant I may follow soon!"

She took it to her heart, as if she would have kept it ever warm there; and sat with it long, feeding her eyes and soul upon it. And none spoke to her.

But at length Mrs. Brandle came, and, gently opening her arms, took the little thing away, and put a white robe upon it; and Archy brought flowers; and it was laid upon a pillow by the window, where it seemed asleep and smiling. The window was open, and the birds were singing; for the afternoon was pleasant.

Then Jehiel came in, leading little Teddy. Jehiel, strong man as he was, stood and wept like a child at the sad

spectacle ; but Teddy, though he had shown through all the baby's sickness a strange sympathy, hushing his play for its sake, watching by it sorrowfully, — Teddy looked up with a wise spiritual smile.

“ Little baby is happy now, ain't she ? ” he said in his simple innocence.

Archy worked all night making a coffin ; and the next day was the burial.

No bell was tolled ; no minister was present ; no throng of mourners came to weep with Luey. It was as she wished. The world kept aloof, — the respectable, virtuous world. Yet Mrs. Brandle and Archy kept not aloof ; and Hannah and her husband led the wondering little Teddy to the grave of the pretty babe he loved, and could not be reconciled to have put away in the dark ground. Besides these, and the sexton with his shovel and hoe, there was none to keep Luey company ; and, oh, to think Guy was not there ! and that her father had never seen her babe, and could never see it !

The afternoon was beautiful : it was early June. The grass about the graves was sprinkled thick with buttercups and golden dandelions, with sweet shadows here and there of fringy tamaracks and young balsams. The sunshine flashed bright on the gray-lettered headstones, and nestled warm in the tender leafage of the larches ; and the finches sang deliciously. And Teddy, after reasoning about it, looked up with a gleam of hope when he saw the faces around him sorrowful, and said, —

“But the angels will be glad; won't they, mamma?”

At that, Arehy was taken, carried beyond himself, and made to utter a prayer full of fervor and solemn gladness; inspired — so it seemed — by an angel choir, in whose arms the spirit-babe had found its heavenly rest. Consoling faith, could Lucy have but believed.

Then the imperturbable sexton laid off his coat in a business-like way, and commenced shovelling smartly, heedless of the sound of the plunging and rattling gravel, falling heavily, not upon the little coffin only and the dead babe, but also upon the mother's buried heart.

The turf had been opened under a mountain-ash, where there was but one other grave.

“I didn't think,” said Lucy, “when they buried my mother, that my own little baby would be brought here next!”

XLV.

THE PRISON.



AFTER the funeral, Hannah went to carry the news of the event to Guy. She took the cars, and was soon walking up the broad shady street in the town where he was. Before her, half hidden by great elms, gleamed a marble-fronted edifice, the finest in the county. Beyond this rose old Mount Solomon, with all his shaggy forests and emerald peaks. The line of verdure, which creeps slowly up the mountain-slopes in spring, had reached the sunny summit, where it smiled. Near the street the river glided; in the elms the hang-bird swung his nest. A lovely region, — as if the purpose were to give those, who entered that fine structure to sojourn long, a last look of the world as they went in, and glimpses of it afterwards over rear walls, which should lend their solitude ingenious stings.

Sadly Hannah went to deliver her sad message, not knowing how she could endure to see Guy in a felon's cell, and add this weight to his trouble. She instinctively delayed her steps under the swaying and pendent boughs, not to admire

their beauty and enjoy the shade, but thinking of life's changes,—how she was once an outcast, in despair, and near to death; and he rescued her, and gave her back to life and happiness,—he who was now in turn an outcast, in despair, and near to death, and she could not rescue him!

“Hannah Hedge! where in the world be *you* going?” And Rhoda Burble came trudging fast after her, bearing a basket.

Hannah started from her revery, and guessed she was going to the same place Rhoda was.

“I want to know if you be!—to see *him*? Wal, he'll be glad to see any of his friends, I should think. I hain't forgot, and I'm sure you hain't, how he befriended *you* once: though I don't often mention the time when he found you beat out by the road, knee-deep in water, and deeper yet in trouble, and brought you home, and had you took care of till your baby was born; and I wouldn't speak on't, only I like to remember his kindness to others, now everybody is turned against him!” And the quick tears rushed into Rhoda's eyes.

“I can't believe he is guilty!” exclaimed Hannah.

“Believe?—I know!” replied Rhoda. “He no more had a hand in Pelt's death than you or me had. You've heard how the gold was flung into our winder after he was in jail; and how could that be, if he had been the robber? It's absurd on the face on't!” she answered her own question triumphantly.

“How does he bear up under it?”

“Beautiful!—he does, re’lly! Cheerful as ever, and just as mild as a lamb. He a man to commit murder! Between you and me, Hannah, I believe ’twas them Biddikins. That old man Biddikin never’d act as he does if he wasn’t guilty. He’s just like a wild man. He won’t speak to anybody, but makes the strangest motions, and runs into the woods to hide when he sees folks coming. It’s a wonder to me they don’t have him took up and put into jail, and let my poor boy out.”

“How does the colonel feel?”

“O Lord! if you ever see a man in the depths of despair! He don’t say much; but I know he feels he’s to blame, and would give any thing to git Guy clear. He has sent to have him have the best lawyers, and every thing comfortable, at his expense. I’ve got some clo’es for him here, and some little nick-naeks, besides some posies Ann Mari’ picked to send. Do you know them folks, Hannah?” For just then a buggy dashed by; and Hannah, with a start, caught Rhoda’s arm. “Sakes alive! you are white as a sheet!”

“I’m a little faint, that’s all!” gasped Hannah.

“Then don’t pull your veil down so! You want all the air you can git. Here, set down on this seat a minute: you look like death!” And getting Hannah upon the bench, and setting the basket beside her, Rhoda began to fan her briskly, and to rub her trembling hands.

The buggy bore two persons, — a man and a woman. The latter alighted at the side-door of the marble-fronted building, and the man drove back alone past the two women under the trees.

All this time, in a room in that stone structure, sits one we know, writing. It is a narrow apartment; the furniture scanty, — a bed, a table, and two chairs; the walls bleak, and staring with whitewash; and the square of sunshine that falls on the bare floor is crossed by the shadows of iron bars. For the building is the court-house; and this is in the indispensable rear-half of it, — the county jail.

The writer is disturbed by the jingling of keys, the turning of locks, and a face at the grated door announcing, “A lady to see Mr. Bannington,” — much as if the jail were his own house, and the sheriff’s son his valet.

A very polite youth is the turnkey; who, at a motion from Guy, unlocks the door with alacrity, and ushers in the visitor.

Slowly she advances, muffled, mysterious, like a woman made of cloud. An ash-colored veil and a gray gown drape her from head to foot. She enters, and stands silent as a ghost; while Guy, rising, regards her with mild astonishment, and the turnkey closes the door with a clank.

Then, when they two were alone, she bowed her head low, and knelt at his feet, lifting her hands clasped under her veil, weeping audibly.

“Christina!” He had recognized her. He stooped to lift her up. “My sister! what does this mean?”

“Oh!” she sobbed, “to think that I have done it all!—deceived, deserted you, brought you here!”

“I have not thought so,” he answered, putting his arm about her kindly, and placing her upon a chair. “No: I have never blamed you. What is this strange dress?”

“I am doing bitter penance, Guy Bannington! When I heard you were here, nothing would appease my soul but I must put on this sackcloth, and with ashes on my head come to you, humble myself again, and get forgiven.”

“Woman!” said Guy, trembling and pale, “am I glad or sorry to see you? I cannot tell: I almost fear. There is something I fear: what is it?”

“What is it?” she repeated in a voice hollow and appalled; and, sweeping aside her veil, she showed him her face harrowed with misery. “Is it death?”

“Death?” He smiled. “This world is beautiful,—oh, I know it! and life is very sweet, for all the tears. But, if my time is come, I am content.”

“But such a death! O Guy! I shall not be content! I am the cause!”

“I find you guilty of no fault, my sister: only you left with me a hyena you did not sufficiently tame.”

“Madison? Oh, I felt it! I did wrong, wrong!” exclaimed Christina. “Tell me, what is it you fear?”

“That work of ours,—that divine work, as we believed,—is it all over with it?” he said, pitifully smiling. “Was it all delusion?”

“If I only knew! — if I could only tell you what I begin to know!” — murmured Christina.

“Have I been altogether a fool?” he continued. “Had I not some reason for my faith? If you have ever deceived me, deceive me not now! Here I am, in the toils of the law, — in the toils of my own soul’s perplexity and doubt; and as God lives, Christina, you will not be guiltless if you keep back from me one word of the truth.”

“I will tell you all!” she answered, weeping the while as she looked at him. “I have not meant to mislead.”

“Did not heavenly influences descend to us?”

“They did; they surely did!”

“I was obedient to them, and not without cause!” And over the deep concern of his countenance there passed a holy glow. “Before my Maker here, I can bear witness that I had no selfish private ends in view. The love of humanity was with me no idle profession. I have closely questioned myself here; and this is no time, and this is no place, for self-flattery. To serve my fellow-men; to be in my poor way a savior of souls, at any sacrifice of myself, — I did pray for that, my sister!”

“Oh, if we had all been as single-hearted as you! — if I had only been!”

“You?” He clasped both her hands in his. “To you, Christina, I owe my life! — not the life of this body, but the life of my soul. You are more than a sister to me: you are my spiritual elder sister. You first awakened in me that

consciousness, that light of the spirit, which I can never lose again ; which is more precious to me than any thing I have lost or can lose ; which comforts me even here."

"To hear you speak so now, it is too much!" she exclaimed betwixt joy and anguish. "I thought you would upbraid me, rail against me, and against everybody and every thing that you could charge with your misfortunes ; for that's the way the world does. Hear me now, and judge. Those influences *were* divine, — we *know* they were ; for did they not pour a divine atmosphere around us ? And were there not signs and wonders to compel belief ? Yet," she added, "we have seen how human wishes muddy even the springs of inspiration !"

"I know it is so with many mediums ; but not with you, Christina !"

"Guy ! can I tell you ? — can I wound you ?"

"Wound me, if the truth can wound. Keep nothing back."

"I have been weak, like the rest. The magnetism of Biddikin's house deceived me first : it had been for years impregnated with the very life of his mind, which was all absorbed in that wretched phantom of a treasure."

Guy regarded her steadily, struck pale and dumb ; for, after all the proofs of her seership, only this could have staggered his faith, — the confession of her own lips.

"For it is a phantom, Guy ! With all that was good and glorious, there were false and fanatical influences, — partly

Biddikin's, partly Murk's. If I had been pure and strong enough, I might have disentangled them ; but I was selfish like the rest !”

“ You, Christina ? What had you to gain ?”

“ Look away ! — do not see my shame when I confess. I was ambitious. I craved the stimulus of excitement. I loved you from the first, and I readily favored that which brought me in contact with you.”

Guy covered his face, and groaned aloud.

“ Believe me,” she said, “ I did not know it was so. Not until I lost you, and crucified myself, and put on this sackcloth, was the truth revealed to me. I believed, as so many believe of themselves, that I had the love of humanity at heart ; that snake of selfishness that hides in the grass of our natures — he is so subtle !”

Guy rose, and paced the room with extreme agitation.

“ Have I been ambitious ? Have I been beguiled by the pride of leadership ? God knows !” He sat down again, sighing heavily. “ Christina, I have had inward whisperings of all you have said ; and I refused to listen to them. I, too, have been guilty : I permitted my wishes, my logic, to stifle my deeper convictions. I have taken truth at second-hand, instead of drawing from the depths of my own spirit. For that sin I am here !”

While he was speaking, the turnkey came to say that Mrs. Burble and another woman were waiting to see him.

“ I can't see them just now : in a few moments, James. Rhoda will be patient.”

He had still so many things to say to Christina, and to hear from her ! The minutes grew to twenty, and he had quite forgotten his other visitors ; when again the keys jingled, and Rhoda's face and basket came to the grate.

"I knew you had company ; and I've been here 'most an hour," said she, "waiting. But I've got to git the next train home ; and I shall have to run for it now."

"I am sorry, Rhoda ; but you see how it is," said Guy. "Open the door, James."

"Bless me !" whispered the housekeeper, lugging in her basket, "ain't that the wonderful medium ! I wish I could git a communication ! Ever since you've been here, I hain't dared to open my mouth about spiritualism : ev'ry thing 'is laid to that. Ann Mari' can't set now, her father's so set against it ; and I'm starving to death."

"Who came with you ?" said Guy, assisting to empty the basket.

"Nobody came with me," replied Rhoda. "But Hannah Hedge came in the same train, in another ear ; and I overtook her in the street. She has been waiting here all this time to see you. She wouldn't come in without she could see you alone ; and, as she has got to go back in the train with me, she left me to do her errant."

"From Luey ?" asked Guy in a low voice.

"The baby !" answered Rhoda softly : "that poor little baby !" — the tears came into her eyes — "was buried this afternoon !"

Guy took hold of the iron-grated door, and leaned against it, his forehead pressing the cold bars. His little neglected Agnes gone, and he could never see her again in this world! The mother childless, and he not there to comfort her! The stroke was heavy. For a minute he was not in the prison-cell with the two women, — they had vanished; and he was far away with love and memory and remorse.

He was aroused by the polite James, who said, “A gentleman to see you,” and, throwing open the door, admitted — the Honorable Cephas Snow.

Rhoda retired with the turnkey, and found Hannah in the waiting-room.

“What! faint again? Dear me! don’t haul your veil down so in this close room! It don’t agree with you to go to jail, I declare! Some perty respectable folks come here, though, as you see. That woman is the famous medium, Miss Freze. But then you ain’t so interested in speritualism as I be, and maybe you never heard of her or of that gentleman. That’s the famous member of Congress, Mr. Snow. Why, what do you hurry so for? We shall catch the train.”

“Did he — stop with Guy?” Hannah breathlessly asked.

“Yes: why? Did you ever see him?” said Rhoda, perplexed by her strange conduct.

“He came into the room; but I scarcely looked at him. Come! or we shall miss the cars!”

Hannah could not be at rest till they were seated in the train and on their way. Then she lifted her veil, leaned her

face by the window, and sighed with relief; though she was still pale, and her large eyes full of trouble.

“I regret exceedingly to find you in this difficulty,” said the Honorable Cephas with a patronizing air. “I trust it is nothing serious.”

“On the contrary, sir,” said Guy, “it is altogether serious. This is not a world of trifles, as some think.” And his hand, which the Congress-man shook so affably, returned no cordiality in its stern grip.

“It is a world of experience and of mutual benefits,” replied the bland Cephas. “I came to see if there is any thing I can do for you.”

“I thank you: there may be much you can do. But let’s understand each other, to begin with. One of the serious things in the world is the word of man to man. You have deceived me once: do not so again. Let us have no more merely polite smiles, and promises made to be broken.”

“It is my fortune,” the Congress-man answered mildly, “to be misunderstood.” A flush spread even to the edge of his fine high forehead, then left it marble-white; and he smilingly seated himself in the chair Guy placed for him. “Suppose that I foresaw what your work was tending to, was I not right in withdrawing from it my support?”

“The officer who deserts his post in the hour of danger, and leaves his comrades to perish without giving them any warning, is called by hard names. Yet you would justify him?” said Guy. “But I don’t suppose you foresaw any such

thing as you pretend ; else, when I called on you to fulfil your engagements, and you exercised your ingenuity to find excuses, you would hardly have failed to give the true reason, your only valid excuse, for breaking such solemn pledges."

"From your stand-point, it is very natural that you should blame me," said the conciliatory Snow ; "and I must endure it patiently."

"But for you, and such as you," answered Guy with iron sternness, "I should not be here. Relying on your promises, I assumed responsibilities which placed me in desperate circumstances ; when you betrayed and forsook me. Yet I blame no one but myself. I only say, deceive me no more. Perform all your obligations, Mr. Snow, — to friends and enemies ; to your parents, if they still live ; and to your children, if you have any. Then, if you will do any thing for me, I will ask a favor."

Christina looked sharply at Cephas, and perhaps knew better than Guy what brought that nervous spasm into his bland features. It was gone in an instant ; and he warmly begged to know what he could do for the prisoner.

"Those poor fellows whom we employed, and whom I would have coined my heart to pay for their hard labor," said Guy, — "it grieves my soul to think of them ! If I get safely out of this, and live, I shall see that justice is done to them. But, in the mean time, they may be suffering ; and perhaps the thing will go against me ; for the evidence is strong. So, if you can do any thing for them, I will be very glad."

“I will see; I will do what I can,” Cephas readily replied. “But I may as well tell you now how I am engaged. I have discovered what you have all been looking for, but none have found, — the true idea of a social re-organization. This is what I have been developing into a system whilst you have supposed I was proving false to my trust. You will see, when I unfold it to you, that I have been laboring as faithfully as you, and perhaps more wisely, for the sacred cause of humanity.”

Snow was himself again; and the smile with which he concluded was finely persuasive. But Christina sighed wearily, and Guy was grim.

“Talk no more of the sacred cause of humanity! We have begun at the wrong end of reform: now let us take hold of the right end. Let us commence with ourselves, set up Christ’s kingdom in our own hearts and lives, and receive the peace of God in our own souls, before we prate any more of a new divine order of things. When we have done this, learned self-government, private charity, daily sacred duty, and purity of life, then, if you live and I live, and we meet again, and you have any large humanitarian scheme to unfold, I will listen to you gladly.”

“Thank you,” said Snow, — white Snow, spotless Snow. And, persistently affable, he once more offered Guy his hand, and received a stern, not cordial grip. “I trust that we shall meet again, and that we shall understand each other better. The jailer is coming: shall we go, Christina?”

“Cephas,” said she, “haven’t you one deep, true word to say to this man before we leave him? Then go: I will come in a minute.” She seized Guy’s hand, and bathed it with tears. “Good-by! Forgive all! Oh, if I could stay and comfort you, and share your fate! But that is not for me!”

“No, my sister; and she who alone has that right will not come. I do not complain; she has good cause; and” — with a gush of grief and tenderness — “she needs comfort now more than I,— my poor Lucy!”

“She shall come to you!” exclaimed Christina. “I will show you that I am not all selfish and bad. If I have done any thing to separate you, it shall be undone. Heaven help me!”

So they parted; and the iron door closed between them.

XLVI.

CHRISTINA AND CEPHAS MAKE CALLS.



LUCY, after the burial, returned to her cheerless room. Mildly as ever, through butternut-boughs pleasantly rustling, the afternoon sunshine entered. The brook plashed and drummed; and high in a maple-top on the forest edge a wood-thrush piped his sweet melodious whistle.

But to Luey it was all dreary blank. The lovely summer weather, the freshness, the murmur, and the stir, awoke no responsive gladness in her heart. The thrush's whistle, which she had often heard at that hour when she watched by her sick babe, stabbed her like a knife. Even Mrs. Brandle's sympathy seemed a mockery.

"Come, Arehy," said the widow: "I guess we'll go. There's such a thing as trying too hard to console them that God has afflicted. If she gets any real peace, it must come within herself; and I feel as though, if she should be left all alone, she'll by and by find the Comforter."

But the Comforter comes not as long as the spirit clings to

any earthly support; nor until all is given up, and from the depths of the soul springs the prayer, "Thy will, not mine, O Father!" And Lucy still clung to one frail outward hope,—that Hannah would return with some message of love and solace from Guy. After the widow's departure, she closed her eyes and her ears, and lay nursing that hope in her bosom, even as she had nursed her sick babe. She prayed, not to God, but to Guy. "Oh, send me some little token! Save me, save me, from this despair!"

So she lay until Hannah returned. And Hannah had not seen Guy, because of the woman that was with him during the hour that she waited. Lucy knew that that woman was Christina; and, with one wild wail of misery, she turned her face to the wall.

It was now evening. One by one the stars came out of the day's blue tent; Arcturus and Lyra marshalling their golden cohorts, majestic and silent. O beautiful night! stillness and starry gloom, how excellent! But there is a night within the night: it envelops the despairing,—darkness utter and rayless.

The heavenly hosts passed over. The glowing urn of Aquarius tarnished in the morning's beam. The mists curled, the mountains bathed their foreheads in the red sunrise, the dew sparkled, and all the earth was glad. But Guy awoke in prison; and Lucy still lay in her trance of misery.

In the afternoon, Hannah became alarmed about her, and

went to consult Mrs. Brandle. Jehiel was away. Then little Teddy erept up stairs, pushed Luey's door open softly, entered, went to the sofa where she lay, and sat down on a stool by her side.

Strange boy! What his mother suffered before he was born must have inspired him with that wise sympathy, so extraordinary in a child. He made no noise, but, as if afraid of waking Luey, folded his tiny hands, pressed his quivering lips together, and looked at her, while large sorrowful tears ran down his cheeks clear as lilies.

Luey did not hear him at all, but felt his presence by that sixth sense of which physiologists make little or no account. When she opened her eyes, and saw him sitting there on the low stool, with patient hands crossed, and lips pressed into silence, while his tears streamed, she was touched; her frozen grief thawed; a gush of love surprised her; and she caught him to her heart.

"Teddy loves you," he said, putting his arms about her neck. "Don't feel bad! Poor little baby!"

"My darling boy! God bless you, my darling Teddy!" she sobbed; for it seemed to her that he had delivered her soul from death.

After that her burden was lightened, and she grew strong to bear the life which had seemed since yesterday so utterly intolerable to her.

And now Jehiel, coming into the house, called Hannah; having picked up, in the world's great wilderness, a little human waif; namely, our young friend Job.

“I will go and get him something to eat,” said Luey. And with a heart lightening more and more as she found that there was still love in the world, and work of love and merey to perform, she went down and astonished Jehiel by her new-born strength and cheerfulness.

He showed her his forlorn charge, — frightened, wishful, wondering Job, whose starved, seared looks moved her pity; seeming to say, “I am an orphan, with none to care for me.” An orphan; and she was childless. Then why should she wish to die?

“Where’s the docter?” asked Jehiel.

“Gone off. He’s afraid,” said Job.

“What’s he afraid of?”

“Don’t know. Guess he’s afraid he’ll be hung. Runs into the woods, and acts orful.”

Jehiel sat resting his lame foot, and questioning the boy; and Luey was getting him some bread and milk; when Teddy said, “Folks coming!” Jehiel went to the door, and admitted a visitor into the parlor.

“Some one to see you, Luey.” But he did not tell her who.

She gave Job his bread and milk, and, unsuspecting, unprepared, went to the parlor; saw a lady rise to meet her; advanced wonderingly; and found herself suddenly face to face with Christina.

“Luey!” said a low, winning voice. Slowly, step by step, backwards, with her eyes fixed as if she saw a serpent,

Lucy shudderingly recoiled. Christina at the same time advanced, extending her hand, and entreating her.

“What have you to do with me?” demanded Lucy; at sight of whose white revolted face the heart of Christina sank within her.

“I come as a friend, — as the friend of him who loves you.”

“His friend! — my friend! Hear it, O Heaven! Well you may weep!” added Lucy. “You have dragged him to ruin and death; you have robbed me of him and of my babe! I hope your tears are sincere!”

Christina was dumb. For this was not the Lucy she had expected to meet; not by any means the soft, passive, pliable creature whom she had imagined unworthy of Guy, and so inferior to herself. The scorn, the flashing loveliness, the roused and wronged womanhood, stunned and convicted her; and she saw too late the error which women of her type — the fiery and restless women — almost invariably commit, when they complacently measure, and contemptuously label “Tame,” those other domestic women, with natures more constant but not colder, more quiet but not less deep, than their own.

It still remained for Lucy to correct her judgment of Christina, — a harder task. Slowly the seeress was gathering into herself the power which she knew so well how to wield, but which had quite gone from her at the moment; and, when she spoke, her voice was gentle and sad and sweet.

“Will you be kind, and hear me a moment?—not for my sake, — for it is my lot to be misjudged, — but for your sake and for his sake.”

Lucy could not refuse. “Speak!”— and, trembling, she sat down. She was near a window: for relief to her burning and agitated feelings, she opened it, and looked out. A stranger was walking up and down under the trees. At a glance from him, full of that peculiar, surprised interest with which certain men regard a new and beautiful female face, she drew back instinctively. His respectable manners and intellectual features could not disguise from her the character of the man accustomed to fascinate and to be fascinated. He took up Teddy in his arms, and gave him his watch to play with. Lucy looked out listlessly at the very charming picture they made; while she heeded with a jealous woman’s ear every word of Christina’s.

For Christina had now fairly begun her good work; pouring out her spirit in a manner which must soon have softened Lucy, and prepared her for a perfect reconciliation with Guy. But the antagonism between these two feminine natures, which had hitherto been so fruitful of misunderstandings and mischiefs, now followed them up with a new fatality. There was a stir without, a fall, a scream from Teddy. Lucy rushed from the room. Christina ran to the window, and saw, not a hurt child, but a woman, swooning on the turf, — Lucy hastening to lift her; Teddy standing by, dumb with terror after his first scream; and the Honorable Cephas Snow pale as marble, and fixedly staring.

Jehiel was on the spot in an instant, demanding to know what was the matter.

“ She came round the corner, saw him,” said Lucy, with a glance at Cephas, “ and fell.”

Jehiel glanced at the Congress-man; then turning his eyes upon his wife, with all his soul in them, spoke to her tenderly as only a strong, tender man can speak.

“ Hannah! — I am with you!”

She clung to him an instant; then, recovering, looked wildly around.

“ Where is he?”

“ Who? That man?”

“ My boy! — my child!” And she snatched Teddy to her heart.

Jehiel and Lucy took them into the house. The Honorable Mr. Snow looked on with a glassy countenance; the muscles of his mouth working as if he would speak. Then he mechanically smoothed his garments which Teddy had ruffled when he struggled from his arms.

“ Cephas,” said Christina, coming to his side, “ do you know that woman?”

“ She seemed afraid,” stammered the Congress-man, “ that I might do the child some harm. Who is that man? — her husband?”

“ Cephas,” — Christina grasped his arm, and looked into his face searchingly, — “ is this the Hannah that lived at your brother’s? who disappeared mysteriously when it became ne-

cessary to hide her shame, and save your respectability? So our sins follow not ourselves only, but live to plague others! You have done an ill turn to Guy, to me, to us all. I can have no more influence with Luey, after such an interruption. Come, let us go; for this woman is married, — may be happy, — and your face cannot be a pleasant sight either to her or to her husband.”

Mr. Snow stood confusedly wiping with his white handkerchief his forehead, scarcely less white, when Jehiel came out.

“Sir!” — stepping up to the honorable gentleman, and speaking in a voice ominously deep and quivering, — “this woman is my wife. I am the father of her fatherless child. You could wrong her once, and play the villain’s part: but she has a protector now; and damn you, Cephas Snow, if ever you dare to trouble her again!”

The honorable gentleman covered his forehead with his handsome hand, and struggled within himself.

“I am not quite the heartless wretch you think me,” he said with twitching lips. “If she knew the painful uncertainty I have felt on her account and the child’s! I think I have a right to ask to see the child.”

“You have; and I have a right to refuse. She thought you had come to claim the boy, — that’s what startled her: don’t imagine ’twas any thing else. Now go: you’d better.”

And Cephas went.

Christina lingered, seeing Job, forgotten by everybody, staring out of the door. She had heard of Doctor Biddikin's insanity and flight; and she took pity upon the homeless orphan.

"Job, come here." And he came obediently. "Where do you live now?"

"Don't live nowheres," said Job, simply smiling. "Got starved out."

"Jehiel," said Christina, "I know you, and honor you. Though you are poor, you would not refuse a home to this child. But let me take him, and he shall be cared for."

The young farmer's knotted fists relaxed, and his threatening visage softened, as he turned from looking after Cephas, and confronted Christina.

"If he will go with you, I have no objection."

"Job, will you go with me?"

"Y-a-a-s!" said Job, brightening; for he had learned to love Christina.

Then she offered Jehiel her hand, and he grasped it convulsively; for his heart was full.

"You are one of Nature's noblemen, Jehiel. You have done one of those rare, courageous, and generous actions which redeem the world."

He knew that she alluded to his marriage with one of those whom society calls fallen, unites to cast out irretrievably, and hunts with endless scorn; and his manly countenance lighted up with a proud smile.

“I have my reward,” he said. “God bless you!”

She hurried to the gate where Snow was untying his horse, and presented to him little Job.

“Cephas, behold your son!”

“Don’t mock me!” he pleaded; for he had seen the beauty of Hannah’s child, and been thrilled by a parent’s yearning.

“Do unto this fatherless boy as another has done unto yours,” said Christina. “This shall be your atonement. You refuse? Then I adopt him.”

“It is very bitter!” said he with a writhing smile. “But it shall be as you say. With my means, perhaps something can be made of him. Let us both adopt him: I will be his father, you his mother. Would you like that, my son?”

“Y-a-a-s!” grinned Job.

And they took him between them into the carriage; and, from that day, Job wanted not a home nor friends.

“We ought to go up on the hill, and see if any thing can be done for the doctor,” said Christina. “And Mr. Murk—I feel that there is something wrong about him. When I have thought of him lately, I have had a strange sensation of starving.”

“Guess I know where Murk is,” whispered Job.

“Tell us, my son,” said Christina.

“I got scaret. Went up on the mountain, find doctor; heard somebody in the hole,” said Job.

“What hole?—the shaft?”

“Y-a-a-s! Day o’fore yis’dy. Searet me, and I run.”

“Cephas, turn about!” exclaimed Christina.

Snow remonstrated. It was late: already the sun had dropped behind the mountains; the valley was in shadow, and it would be dark before they could get to the crags. But Christina enforced her command with an imperious gesture; and he obeyed.

They arrived at Biddikin’s house: it was empty. There they left Job, and set out for the summit. Up through the woods they toiled in the deepening twilight, and reached the shaft just as the stars were appearing.

“Murk!” called Christina with clear, shrill voice.

“Murk!” echoed back the forest on the eastern slope; but there issued no sound from the shaft. And they stood listening on the sombre, silent, sublime crag; no living thing near, — only a night-hawk sweeping by in his zigzag flight.

The night-hawk sailed over the valley, betwixt them and the purple ships of cloud floating in the orange sea of sunset, and disappeared, a speck in the expanse of brightness; leaving the mountain more lonely for his brief visit. Christina gazed at the sky, the dim mountainous world darkening under its gloriously tinted rim, the light fading from the peaks; and remembered with grief the last time she stood upon those rocks, — the evening when Guy was with her, and she fled from him, as she believed, forever.

“There’s no Murk here,” said Cephas. “Here’s the

tub ; and how could he get into the shaft ? Come, let's go : it will soon be dark."

" We used to have a lantern in the hut," replied Christina. " Have you matches ? "

" Yes ; but what do you mean to do ? "

Christina hastened to the hut, entered in the darkness, and groped till she found the lantern hanging in its place. She was returning with it, when a dismal groan came up from a corner of the hut, thrilling her blood cold.

" What was that ? " cried Cephas at the door.

" Give me a match ! " whispered Christina. A scratch on the rough board ; and she lighted the lantern. The yellow beams fell upon the low roof and the beds of straw, and revealed an object, like a human form, rising from the ground.

It was a man, shrunken and shrivelled to a mere thing of skin and bone. He rested on his knees, grimacing with fright, and making unintelligible gestures like one appealing for mercy.

" Doctor Biddikin ! " ejaculated the horrified girl. " What are you doing here ? "

He seemed bereft of the power of speech ; but, in his ghostly pantomime, he pointed to something on his breast. It was a card of pasteboard, suspended by a string from his neck. She advanced the light towards it, and read, scrawled in large uncouth letters, with red ink,—or it might have been blood, — these words : —

" NOT GUILTY."

With irrepressible loathing, Christina crept out of the hut.

“Speak to him, Cephas! I am sick!”

“Where is Murk, doctor?” asked Cephas, holding the lantern.

The wretch made a motion of putting a noose about his neck, and pointed to the cross-pole of the hut.

“We can get nothing from him; and we have no time to loose.”

“Come, then,” said Christina. “We will attend to him afterwards.”

They went back to the shaft, tried the windlass, and, finding it safe, prepared the tub for a descent. She stepped into it with the lantern. Cephas swung her off, and slowly unwound the rope.

Down into the pit she goes, lighting it with a sallow gleam as she descends; looking up at the diminishing space above her; peering into the darkness beneath; till the bucket settles upon the rocky floor, and the rope slackens in her hand. Then she steps out; looks timidly around; alone in the tragical place.

Tragical indeed! For in this rocky nest the egg of Fate had been hatched for Pelt, untimely. Here Biddikin had dug the grave of his soul. Into this pit Guy had fallen, by her own hand led to its brink. Sepulchre of enthusiasm and sacred hopes! And, lo! what is this?

Within the cavern branching from the shaft, bolt upright, his back against the rock, his head horribly on one side, his open eyes glazed and fixed, never blinking at the shine of the lantern, — there he sits, the stolid, silent man.

Let down by his disciple into this rare hiding-place; the bucket withdrawn to prevent suspicion; deprived of all assistance by the hand of the law laid upon Madison; his small stock of provisions got in at night failing him; no angels bringing him bread, no ravens feeding him; liberty and blue sky above, but famine down there gripping him, — so ended the days of Murk, philanthropist and prophet!

Cephas, looking down into the lighted bottom of the pit, guessed what she had found. A minute later she stepped into the tub, and shook the rope for a signal. The windlass turned, the lantern-gleam crept up the scraggy walls, and darkness closed over the horror.

“’Tis as well so,” said Christina, placing the lantern on the stones, and sitting down by it. “Leave him to his rest. Farewell, Moses! But who would have thought” — she smiled a dreary smile — “that all this trouble and toil and expense was — for what? To shape a fitting and magnificent sarcophagus for the great Mr. Murk! What a world it is! And I am sad for his sake, Cephas! I suppose he had a mother once, who took that head upon her bosom, and stroked it fondly, and combed it into curls. Now it hangs there so heavily, with that great nose cold and leaden! And

the poor man did really think he had a messiahship : don't you think he did, Cephas ? But *requiescat!* — we must leave the dead, and look after the living.”

They had almost forgotten the doctor. But now they returned to the hut : it was empty. Biddikin was gone ; and, after searching and calling in vain about the rocks, they departed, descending the mountain-path by the light of the lantern.

XLVII.

THE NIGHT BEFORE THE TRIAL.



HE next day, Lucy received a visit from Guy's attorney, whose errand filled her with consternation.

"You will probably," he said, "be required as a witness at the trial. Every effort will be made by the prosecution to show that the gold taken from the late Mr. Pelt passed through the hands of your friend Mr. Bannington; and it is highly important for the defence to know if there is any evidence that can be construed as having a bearing on that point."

In her dismay and agitation, she could only answer, "I can't be a witness! Give me time to think of it!" To which he cheerfully assented; and, throwing out some delicate hints for her consideration, withdrew.

Alone, face to face with the appalling fear that she might be compelled to give evidence against her lover's life, Lucy's first thought was to go straight and drown herself. Then arose Christina's image, and with it a monstrous suspicion.

Yesterday she could not divine what brought that woman to her with tears and insidious speech ; but the attorney's business explained it. Because she was baffled, he was sent to her ; the object being to disarm her resentment against Guy, (oh, how little they knew her heart !) and to induce her to withhold her testimony, and perhaps even to perjure herself, in order to save him, — not for herself, but for that woman who had brought all this evil upon her and him !

Perverse child ! Why would she not see that her jealousy was unjust ; that her suspicion of Christina's motive in visiting her was unfounded ? Why will a woman be — a woman ? And why can't we all learn to do what she failed to do, — to judge not from appearances, but to judge righteous judgment ? Because readers of books, and writers of books, and those of whom books are written, if the books be true, are still made of the same old stuff, — the *divine warp* with the *human filling* ; and to see our neighbors' hearts as they see themselves, or as God sees them, requires that in us the filling also should be transparent with celestial tints.

That night, in the darkness, Lucy saw a light, which flashed upon her with sudden intensity, showing her what she should do ; and the next day, when the attorney came again, she had her firm, sad answer ready : —

“ If I am called to testify, I shall testify to the truth.” To the agent of the prosecution who afterwards visited her, she gave the same response ; and more she would not say. The result was, that she was summoned as a witness by both

parties ; while it was doubtful if she would be required by either. Indeed, the object of the defence doubtless was — as Guy's lawyer hinted — to mislead the prosecution by assuming that her testimony would be favorable to the prisoner, and thus, if possible, to keep her out of the case altogether.

The trial was to take place in the July session of the court, — already at hand. And now Lucy, whose love, in spite of every thing, was not dead, longed to visit Guy, but could not, because she knew who was with him, comforting him. Since his arrest, she had not seen him ; and all this time she had received from him but one brief note, in which he indirectly asserted his innocence, and urged her not to despair of him or of happiness. The baby's sickness had prevented her from answering it ; and how could she write to him now ? All she could do was to nurse her aching heart alone, and tremblingly await the event.

Ah ! could she have looked clairvoyantly into Guy's cell and into his heart ! Could she but visit him this evening, — this last dread evening before the trial, — and behold that illumined face of his, and hear the tones of his voice ! He is sitting on the bed, his friends — the friends she detests — before him. Cephas is there, a humbled man ; and the old patriarch Haddow, lately out of the asylum, is wringing Guy's hand with the pressure of love and affliction ; and Christina is on a stool at his feet, thinking bitterly of the morrow, and weeping.

“ What does it all mean ? ” the old man implores to know.
“ What, my son, is God's lesson ? ”

“What it is for others, I do not know; what it is for myself, I begin to see;” and Guy’s smile shines beautifully in the light of the jail-lamp. “Don’t cry, my girl! The experience I have had, from the day I first saw you up to this hour, I consider invaluable: it has been far more precious than it has been painful. Though I feel some remorseful twinges, I really cannot regret any thing, — especially when I think of the spiritual insight I have gained, and the love and faith and patience of my soul, which I feel so much greater and richer within me than they were a year ago,” he adds, with a strange softening of the countenance, remembering that a year ago, at this hour, he was carrying Lucy to her new home in Jehiel’s house. Dost thou remember it too, Lucy, alone in that room to-night?

“But the labor for humanity, the mighty reform so needed,” falters the white-haired patriarch, — “were we all deceived?”

“Never believe it!” says Guy. “We had the glimpse of a blue ocean of truth there: only we made a slight mistake when we undertook to build a canal to contain it. Our grand scheme was a little canal. Every such artificial attempt to reconstruct society must fail. The temple of the millennium must build itself — as the body, the soul’s temple, builds itself — from the life within. A prophet may foresee what is to be: but neither you nor I can set up for a prophet yet, Mr. Snow,” — pleasantly smiling; for he knew that Cephas had *his* theory of the New Jerusalem in his pocket. “By questioning the needs of our inmost natures, we may learn the

needs of humanity ; for the truth of one soul is the truth of all souls, and every aspiration is a prophecy. Hints from this deep source are always helps : they quicken hope, and so hasten the golden era. Beyond this, no theory is of any use ; for theories are intellectual, — the more elaborate, the more fatal. Whatever is to reach the soul must proceed from the soul : you must have fire, and not machinery. How suggestive our little experiment was, up there on the mountain, Christina ! I have been thinking how curious and how sad it was that what appeared at first a holy work, assumed, as we proceeded, the aspect of a worldly enterprise ; till we almost lost sight of spiritual ends in the entanglement of material details. This is the great danger of every such undertaking : the external kills the internal. O my friends !” — after a pause, his countenance kindling, — “ when I look into the realm of ideas, and touch the sources of inspiration and power, I am ravished with joy and worship ! To draw our daily life from those high springs, and to lead others up to them by our good works, — this is the true reform ; this is what every one may do for humanity. We may work together, too, my dear old father, when the One Spirit moves us all ; but our crude notions of an *organization* must be given up.”

“ It may be so, it may be so !” the old man answers, full of emotion. “ I scarcely think of those things now. I think of you, our leader, — that solemn consecration ! And now to find you here ! — Can you realize ” — turning to Christina — “ that it is he ? ”

“Why shouldn’t I be here as well as another man?” Guy replies. “I am not a murderer; and I am not sure that any man ever was a murderer at heart. I begin to sympathize with the poor fellows, my brother-sinners: I begin to see them as I think the All-Father sees them. Consider me the worst criminal that ever entered these walls; and consider too, my friend Snow, that, born with the propensities I was born with, and placed in such circumstances as have made me what I am, you would have done precisely what I have done, God permitting. Then where is your self-righteousness? If you are holy, thank God for it. If I am degraded, help me; pity me; punish me, if necessary for my good or for the general good: but don’t be vindictive, and don’t set yourself up very high over me.”

“Bless you, bless you for these words!” exclaims Haddow with streaming tears. “He is greatest whose charity is greatest. You are our leader still!”

“Leader!” Guy shakes his head at the recollections the word calls up. “I suppose I had some secret vanity, some ambitious egotism, that needed to be killed. In my journey to Boston and New York last winter, I saw no less than seven leaders, or coming men, besides Cephas and myself! One of my competitors claimed that he was the greatest intellect that had yet been vouchsafed to this planet; and mildly hinted, that, as the Divine Being comes to consciousness only in the human mind, he was, *par excellence*, the Divine Being! After that, I was ready to give in. Yet” — more seriously

—“the consecration had a deep meaning for me. One prophecy at least has been fulfilled : one reality remains.” And, unlocking a casket, he takes out the crown of thorns. “This, and the cross that was shown me in the heavens, — I understand them now ! Christina, my sister, do not look at me with such anguish in your eyes. I thank God for all !”

He sits with the crown on his head a minute, his hands crossed, his eyes upturned ; then lays it upon his Bible on the table.

“The cross, and the crown, and that book, — O Christ ! that it should have taken so much to make me understand what is so divinely simple ! The Bible is dead to us because we are dead. So long as we regard it as a record of an age of miracles long since closed, it is lost time turning its pages ; but, when we learn that it treats of the possibilities of man in all ages, with what vital interest we read ! To see its light, the same light must be lighted within ourselves. Our experience explains it, while it in turn explains our experience.”

Christina looks up eagerly.

“Guy Bannington, tell me now one thing. . After all you have suffered, notwithstanding you have been so wronged and deceived, and in spite of all that is dangerous, ridiculous, and impure in their manifestation, do you still believe in spiritual gifts and in the holy communion of spirits ?”

“I do, Christina, as firmly and truly as ever. Beautiful and sweet and real to me is that faith. I have been wronged, deceived, misled, not by God’s truth, but by man’s imperfec-

tions. The dangers and crudities you allude to arise from our own selfishness and ignorance, from defective mediumship, and perhaps from the imprudence of lying and fanatical spirits. These are but clouds in the heaven that shines pure and blue over all. We have only to elevate ourselves in order to rise above them, and breathe the ether of inspiration free from taint. We may reach a region where only lofty and holy intelligences can exist, — where no impure influence can come. Until then, let us accept the truth wisely, remembering that God's most precious gifts to men are those which are capable of the worst abuse. We are not so foolish as to curse the fire because it sometimes burns us, or the sea because it drowns, or love because evil men may turn it into evil. It is the part of wisdom to govern the fire and ride the waves, and so to live, that love, which is the best of life, shall ever remain to us the sweetest and the best. So this glorious truth of spirit-communion has laws which we must learn to obey. If one is burned by it, or drowned, or if knaves and fanatics make knavery and fanaticism of it, as they never fail to do of every new and vital religious faith, we should recognize these as merely human accidents, and not on their account be so weak and unwise as to denounce the truth itself. No, my friends! We will ridicule what is ridiculous, proclaim what is dangerous, shun what is false, and even relate our own failures in order that others may profit by our experience; but, through all, we will steadily pursue the truth, and hold fast that which is good."

So Guy continues to talk until the time of parting arrives.

“Pray for me, my friends, to-morrow!”

One by one they embrace him, and pass out; Christina last: and the prisoner is left alone, — to sleep, if sleep he can.

Guy in his cell, Lucy in her chamber, — the night passes over both, and the morning of the next day dawns.

XLVIII.

THE PROSECUTION.



HE long-dreaded day at last! Such days come as punctually as any. We cannot perceive that our misery makes any difference with them. The great, dull, grinding wheel does not stop to consider what it is crushing. Over hearts, or over flowers, it rolls the same. Even the day of the crucifixion did not shirk its place in the calendar; did not delay its awful coming; but rose and set duly like the rest.

Lucy thinks of this, and with an inward prayer rises to meet the inevitable. The day her baby was buried came and went, remorseless. She knows, that, if Guy is soon to end his career on the scaffold, the still sheeny morning of the execution will arrive and smile upon it, and the night will follow with its stars and dew. And this, the day of the trial, when the secret she carries in her heart may be wrenched from her by the torture of the law, — this day, now dawning, will pass the same; and it cannot be shunned.

The forenoon is gloomy, drizzling, and chill. She takes

the cars with Jehiel, remembering well when last she travelled southward by this road, — when Guy made her flight *from* him a flight *with* him, and, in spite of herself, she was glad ! How different that morning from this ; that freshness and splendor from this drizzle and gloom ; the heart-beats then from these heart-beats now !

Jehiel took her to the Mount-Solomon House ; and, as if by a fatality, she was given the same room she occupied on her return thither with Guy from their journey. She sat down by the window with a wrung heart, and looked for the summit of the mountain, on whose glory she feasted her eyes that day. But it was hidden now ; plunged in stormy cloud, and draped in lowering mist. And the streets she looked down upon then, — the pleasant village streets, — they were wet and gusty now, and traversed by the wheels and umbrellas of people thronging to the court-house.

She was sitting near a door which separated her room from the next, and which divided not the rooms only, but also, as doors do so often, two worlds : on one side Lucy, gazing across the rainy common towards the court-house, supposing that her lover's fate was to be decided there, and not here so near her ; while on the other side, at that very moment, within six feet of her, sat the district-attorney writing, every stroke of whose swift pen was a thread in the black cordon he was twisting for Guy's neck.

Presently somebody entered that other room, and Lucy heard voices.

“It’s my opinion it must be done. What we want is to strike a deadly blow against spiritualism, which is at the bottom of this whole affair.”

“That’s true; and I mean to get Bannington convicted, if the thing is possible.”

“It’s sure, if we put in young Biddikin’s evidence. Jinket is sure he can swear to as straight a story as ever a witness did; and it will tell with the jury better than any thing else we can produce: for we don’t want to risk the Arlyn girl, unless we are obliged to; though there ain’t much doubt but that she knows about the gold. My advice is, that we hold her in reserve, and use Biddikin. What do you think?”

So much, Luey, terror-struck, could overhear; and the speakers departed together.

How, after this, she got through the hours of that morning, it would be hard to say. Jehiel, who had promised to bring her the news from time to time, seemed to have forgotten her. She could only watch the court-house through the dark wet trees, and imagine what was doing within: the blood-thirsty attorneys, the gaping crowd, and Guy in the midst, — Guy, whom she had lost, but whom she loved still with undying love.

At length, some one came. Faint with fear, she opened the door, and let in Archy.

“I see Jehiel over t’ the court; and, ’s he ’xpects to have to go on to the stand agin, he can’t leave, and wanted me to come and tell you.”

“ You are not a witness ! ”

“ Me ?—no : guess they don’t want nothin’ of me ; though I guess, if they knew ! I heard some men say the most that’s wanted is a clew to that gold ” —

“ ‘Sh ! ’ said the terrified Lucy, thinking of the thin doors. “ Speak low ! What are they doing ? ”

From what he had witnessed, Archy was convinced that it was all going against Guy, This, as Lucy particularly questioned him, he was compelled to admit. “ But,” he added to comfort her, “ t’other side’s to be heard next : then we’ll hear a different story.”

He returned to the court-room ; and again she waited, — waited. After long, dismal, rainy hours, Jehiel came in with a countenance gloomy as the weather.

“ Tell me at once — every thing — the worst ! ” she said in a breath.

“ The lawyers are having a battle about a witness the prosecution wants, and the other side don’t. Mad Biddikin — he has offered to turn State’s evidence.”

“ And that will kill Guy ! Oh, I know ! ”

“ If the court rules that he can be admitted, then the jury will take his testimony for what it appears to be worth ; which isn’t much, in my judgment,” said Jehiel. “ We’ll know to-morrow.”

So there was to be another day of terrible anxiety. Lucy resolved not to pass it there in that room, lonely, waiting. Any thing would be better than that.

Next morning, it was raining still. At an early hour she entered the court-room with Jehiel, who placed her in the witnesses' box. The places for spectators were already crowded, and more without were trying to get in; for the public interest in the trial was intense. Soon the judges appeared, and gravely composed themselves on the bench; the jurymen settled in their places, old-fashioned fellows mostly, joking a little among themselves to show that they felt altogether at their ease; the lawyers bustled within the bar; and Luey, unregarded and unknown, looked through her veil at the somehow ghastly spectacle.

There were many faces she knew; and among them she recognized, with a start of pain, Aunt Pinworth, unusually pale and prim, and Sophy, unusually flushed, fanning themselves. What had brought them here? And who was taking leave of them, — the large-framed, gray-haired man, with his back towards Luey? She almost stifled where she sat, as he turned, and she saw the changed face of her father. He was haggard from his recent illness; his countenance stern, — was it with resentment against her? In vain she had tried to see him; in vain sent to him: and now, though he walked by within arm's-reach of her, she could not even put out her hand to him, but there she must sit, veiled and still, with her heart swelling and contracting with anguish and yearning.

He took his seat within the bar. What business had he there?

A commotion in the crowd, and whispers of "Bannington!"

roused Lucy. She expected to see Guy brought in, and prepared herself for the sight. But there came a wheeled chair instead, — the chair we know, with the sharp-faced invalid we know, now sharper-faced than ever, as he came to witness his son's trial. A place was made for him within the bar: Arlyn rose for the purpose; and the two enemies, the two fathers, looked at each other.

So intently was Lucy watching this scene, that she did not know when Guy entered. He was composedly seated in the prisoners' box when she saw him. Then came silence, and the judge talked; but she hardly knew what he was saying, or heeded any thing but Guy's interested calm face, till Madison was brought in.

He was accompanied by an officer and the lantern-jawed Mr. Jinket. He was extremely pale; but he carried his head with a resolute brazen air, and mounted the platform with something like a swagger.

He kissed the Book, after a brief exhortation from the judge; and the examination commenced, Guy's counsel acquiescing with discontented looks.

“Go on, now, and tell us what you know of the murder.”

“I was loading a pistol; when Mr. Murk he come to me, and says he” —

“Never mind the *says he* till you tell us when and where this was.”

Mad's eyes gleamed as they sought Jinket's face. Jinket nodded softly; and, having given the desired information, he

proceeded to relate how Murk took him to the woods, where they found Guy.

“What did you do with the pistol?” asked the State’s attorney.

“I took it along with me, — thought I might shoot some robins. But Guy claimed it, and made me give it up to him; said he might want it for something besides birds.”

A look of indignant astonishment ruffled Guy’s features a moment, then passed; and, amid a hush of intense expectation, Mad continued: —

“I had brought a rope, which we stretched across the road as soon as it was dark, and tied with a slip-knot to a tree. When we heard a buggy coming, I stood ready to pull the knot loose, and let it pass if it wasn’t the right one. But we happened to catch Pelt the first time, as we knew by his talking to his horse; and he got out, just as we expected, to see what had stopped him.”

Mad explained circumstantially the way the rope was arranged, while every ear was strained to listen. Then he went on: —

“It was awful dark. I was feeling in the wagon for the money, — for we didn’t know just where he would carry it, — when all to once I heard a squabble, and Pelt screamed, ‘Murder!’ Then there was a flash of lightning, and I saw Pelt on the ground, hanging on to somebody that was trying to shake him off.”

“Who was that *somebody*?”

Mad hesitated, and cast his eyes restlessly about him for a moment ; then rubbed his forehead.

“ Must I say who it was ? ”

“ You have volunteered to take the oath, and you can keep nothing back now.”

“ It was Guy Bannington ! ” said Mad. “ He was half on his feet, trying to get rid of Pelt. Murk stood close by, with the bag of gold in his hand. Then I heard Guy say, ‘ Boys, he knows us : what shall we do ? ’ And Murk said, ‘ Do what is necessary to the brother ! ’ ”

“ Go on. What next ? ”

“ Next I heard the pistol go off. Pelt just give one groan, and that was all. Then the horse was scaret, and broke the rope, or else Pelt had got it untied. He knocked Guy over as he run, and made him drop the pistol. He and Murk tried to find it, but thought they heard somebody coming : so we all run into the woods.”

“ Was there anybody ? ”

“ We concluded there wasn’t, as we didn’t hear any thing more. Guy took the gold ; and we went over with him by the cross road to the south road, and down almost to Mrs. Brandle’s, when he told us to go home and keep quiet. Then he got over the fence, and went towards the woods again ; and, supposing he was bound for Jehiel Hedge’s, we turned round, and went back.”

“ Why did you think he was going there ? ”

“ He was owing Jehiel money. Besides,” — Mad

grinned, — “there was a young woman there he used to go and see sometimes.”

He paused. The audience moved and rustled with excitement. The jury stirred in their seats, and looked sweaty and convinced. The colonel was white as a sheet. Even Lucy, who up to this time, notwithstanding every circumstance against Guy, had cherished a secret faith that he was not the murderer, was overwhelmed by the general conviction of his guilt. For a time, all things looked dizzy and blurred to her. She heard with ringing ears the sharp cross-examination, by which the counsel for the defence vainly endeavored to entangle Mad in his statements. She saw dimly, as through a mist, her father conversing with one of the lawyers. Then all seemed ended. Mad was placed in the prisoners' box near Guy, and Mr. Jinket came and leaned over the rail near him with a satisfied air; and the prosecuting-attorneys smiled triumphant.

Well they might. They whispered together a moment, and probably concluded not to “risk the Arlyn girl.” Accordingly, one of them arose, and announced, that, although they had other witnesses, they considered their case so well established, that the production of further evidence on their part would be superfluous.

Then the junior counsel for the defence leaped to his feet. He congratulated the jury. They had already, he said, been sufficiently nauseated with perjury.

“You have listened with patience; so have we, — although

it required all our Christian virtues to restrain us from clapping on our hats, and walking out of a court where such a gross outrage against justice and common sense was persisted in by the learned counsel of the other side.

“They have called a dozen or more witnesses; and what have they proved? First, that a murder has been committed; which nobody denies. Second, that the prisoner laid claim to the money, which was to be paid by the Germans for the farm given him by his father; and that he was naturally anxious about it, having good reason to distrust his agent, whom he therefore wished to meet on his return home with the proceeds of the sale. This is all they have proved; and all this we readily admit. But that he did meet his agent as alleged, or that the gold ever passed into his hands, has not been proved, and cannot be proved.”

This was spoken with an emphasis which lighted a gleam of satisfaction in the faces of all who sympathized with the prisoner, — save one. Paler still under its veil grew that face. Could not be proved? Lucy knew!

The speaker proceeded to state his case, promising the jury that they should soon see the evidence of Biddikin's perjured son completely demolished, and the innocence of the prisoner as completely established.

He sat down, and the first witness for the defence was called, —

“BENJAMIN ARLYN.”

And Lucy's father stepped upon the platform.

XLIX.

THE DEFENCE.



HE appearance of this most unexpected witness was one of those surprises which thrill a courtroom of spectators with fresh interest, and have upon the opposing counsel the effect of a masked battery suddenly opened.

And Lucy and Guy — what was the effect on them ?

After a hush of suspense, Arlyn's voice was heard, deep, earnest, convincing. He related how he chanced to be travelling up the road on the evening of the murder ; how he heard shrieks and a pistol-shot ; how he saw by a lightning-flash somebody running in the bushes ; and how he afterwards stumbled over Pelt's dead body.

Here he paused, wiping his brow, and leaning feebly on the rail. The audience took breath. Thus far, he had curiously corroborated Mad's evidence ; and Lucy felt a dreadful apprehension that he, too, was testifying against Guy.

“Go on, sir. What next ?”

“I was overcome ;” and the big-hearted Benjamin's voice

trembled with the remembrance. "I had had some hot thoughts against that very man, and might have done him an injury; and to find him dead there in the woods was a good deal of a shock. I didn't raise any alarm, nor go for help, as maybe I ought to've done. I just got into the woods a little ways, and sat down by a tree. I was trying to collect myself, — for my head was buzzing, — when I heard something like a footstep. I hearkened, and was sure there was a man treading pretty close to me."

"Can you describe the lay of the land and your position at the time?"

"I can give some idea of it. Here runs the main road east and west," — drawing an imaginary diagram on the platform: "here's where the murder was. Two or three rods above is the little cross-road, which runs south, and connects with the road that runs south-east from the village, over the mountains, that way. Here, maybe a couple of rods from the main road, is a bridge, where the cross-road crosses the brook. I was in this angle, between the bridge and the dead man."

"That will do. Now go on."

"The man crept by me, and seemed to be groping about the spot of the murder, as I could see by a faint glimmer of lightning. Pretty soon he came back, and stood within six foot of where I was, and gave a little whistle. 'Find it?' I heard somebody say just behind me. 'No! cus the pistol!' said the one that whistled. 'I won't hunt any longer.' Just

then came a flash of lightning, and I saw two men. They wasn't more than three yards from me, I should say. The one that was going from me showed a side-view of his face : the other, a little farther off, was fronting me."

"Did you know these men?" was asked amid profound silence, broken only by the scratching of the legal pens.

"The one fronting me I didn't know : he struck me as a lean sort of man, with a big nose. The other I knew well enough."

Arlyn looked towards the prisoners' box. There sat Guy, with his scintillating, expectant eyes fixed on him. At his side was Madison, uneasy and sullen.

"Let that young man stand up : I mean young Biddikin."

Mad waited to be ordered by the court, then put his chin a little on one side, inclined his head a little on the other, set an arm akimbo, and with an arrogant and brazen stare stood up.

"Turn him a little around," said the witness. "So ! *There's the profile I saw in the woods !*"

"And you saw no third man there?"

"No third man, except him lying in the road."

Mad was then permitted to sit down ; and he sank into his seat with a reckless and revengeful glare, which contrasted strongly with Guy's beaming, almost gleeful expression. The witness continued : —

"One of the men went down to the brook, — to wash him-

self, I supposed. Then both went over the bridge. The water made such a noise, I couldn't hear any more that they said. But I got up, and watched after 'em ; and, when it lightened again, I saw the same two men going off on the cross-road together. That was the last of 'em."

A breath of relief heaved the packed audience ; and just then a procession of sunbeams, leaping from the clouds to the mountain-top, and sweeping across the wet green valley like a golden squadron of fairy knights, flung their yellow banners into the court-room windows and upon the heads of the people. Lucy saw the bright omen through joyous, blinding tears.

But it disappeared as suddenly as it came, leaving the court-room gloomier than before ; and a chill fell upon her heart when the cross-examination began.

"What did you mean, sir, when you said your head was buzzing?"

"I meant I had had my feelings wrought upon, so that it had kind of confused my faculties for the time being."

"You had just learned that the business you intrusted to Mr. Pelt had gone wrong?"

"Yes, sir."

"And that a member of your family had gone wrong too?"

Arlyn gasped and nodded.

"These discoveries, made suddenly on your return home, when you anticipated finding your property safe and your daughter happy and respected, — they had seriously disturbed you, had they?"

“I—I was shaken!” faltered the old man, clutching the rail.

“Then to find the man you were in pursuit of dead in the woods, was, you say, a very great shock?—it produced a buzzing? How long did it continue?”

“I can’t say that my head was free and clear again that night.”

“And you remained in the woods after losing sight of the two men?”

“I was tired, — worn out in soul and body, I may say; and I laid down in the woods.”

“Rather wet, wasn’t it?”

“I didn’t mind that. I’ve laid on the wet ground many a time in California” —

“Never mind your California adventures now. How long did you lie there?”

“I can’t say exactly. It might have been an hour; it might have been two or three hours.”

“You were not in a very clear state of mind, then?”

Arlyn wiped his face again, struggling with his feelings; then answered with the sternness of a tortured but forbearing man, —

“I have told you.”

“Well, what did you do then?”

“I wandered about till I came to Widow Brandle’s house, who took me in.”

“Widows are very kind; they do sometimes take in folks,”

said the lawyer, to raise a laugh, and confuse the witness ; while the latter frowned with dignified contempt. " Well, what happened after she took you in ? "

" I remember she and her son behaved like Christians to me ; which I can't say of everybody. But what happened that day and some days after is still confused in my mind ; and I wouldn't like to swear to any thing. "

" You had a fever and delirium ? "

" They tell me I was a little out of my head, " said Arlyn, leaning tremblingly on the rail.

" You have hardly recovered yet, have you ? "

" I ain't strong yet ; but, when I heard last night that young Biddikin was going to turn State's evidence, I made up my mind " —

" Never mind how you made up your mind. A member of your family has reason to feel a strong interest in the prisoner's welfare : is it not so ? "

The old man's chest heaved, and his eyes kindled ; but he was dumb. The question was objected to by Guy's counsel. The prosecution insisted.

" What we wish to show is that the witness has a secret bias in favor of the prisoner. Not that he means to perjure himself, — we acquit him entirely of any such intention ; but the confused state of mind he has been in, by his own account, ever since the evening of the murder, renders it probable that he will give evidence according to what he imagines or desires, but not at all according to facts. "

Then the old man answered, —

“I have not seen my daughter; and whatever she may feel is nothing to me. As for myself, I have no reason to love any of the name of Bannington.”

“Then how happens it that you come here and offer yourself as a witness for the prisoner?”

“I set out to tell you once,” said the old man grimly; “but you seem as afraid of a grain of truth as a Mexican is of a bullet.”

“Well, tell us now.”

“I came here because I felt that Biddikin was going to perjure himself; and because, though I may hate a man, I love to see justice done.”

“Then why didn’t you make known before what you heard and saw — or imagined you heard and saw — with that buzzing head of yours?”

“I told you, I have been sick. I have but just got out again; and, with the feeling I had towards the Banningtons, I was in no hurry to give myself up to be teased and worried by lawyers.”

The laugh was against the attorney; and, finding that he was on the wrong track, he made haste to come back to the buzzing in the head; putting the most ingenious questions to confuse the old man, and to prove by his own admissions that he was not a competent witness in the case. Poor Lucy listened with dismay and grief. In vain the defence interposed. At length, Arlyn turned to the bench.

“I ask protection. I am not well. I came here to speak the truth, like an honest man. I have done it, to the best of my ability; and I hope I am not to be kept here to make sport for the Philistines.”

There was a grandeur of sorrow about the shattered stalwart man which suited well the comparison of himself to old Samson bound and blind. After that, the prosecution let him go, for very shame.

Colonel Bannington was called, lifted upon the platform in his chair, and sworn. He testified respecting the gold which was flung in at his window, and footsteps which were found outside next morning. And now Archy turned ghastly where he stood, and Luey trembled.

“I knew the footsteps,” said the colonel. “I can swear very positively about them. They were made by a pair of boots which used to belong to me. They had very peculiar heels;” which he proceeded to explain. “I never had but two such pairs of boots, or saw any others like them.”

At this point, Archy would certainly have sunk to the floor but that the crowd in which he was jammed held him up. Guy looked more uneasy than he had at any moment during the trial; and Luey believed that all was over.

“The footsteps,” continued the colonel, “were made that night, and made by a pair of those boots. I gave one pair to Madison Biddikin last summer, when he worked for me: I believe he stole the other pair; for they disappeared about the same time.”

Mad gave a snort of angry contempt. It was well he did not know — it was well the colonel did not know — that a pair of those boots were pinching Archy's feet at the moment. They had been presented to him by Guy, and worn by him on the evening when he disposed of the gold for Lucy. Had but his name been mentioned in connection with them, he would have been summoned to the stand, and Mad would have remembered seeing him near Bannington's orchard that night, and the gold would have been traced back to Lucy and to Guy. It was a narrow escape: his name was *not* mentioned, — not even during the cross-examination, when the colonel was asked if he had had no other person at work for him to whom he might have given a pair of the boots, and forgotten the circumstance. He swore very roundly on that point; and Archy, squeezing himself out of the press, and gaining the open air, felt like one delivered, weak and shaking, from the jaws of lions. The first thing he did was to hurry home and change his boots; thus missing the most exciting part of the trial.

For, when the defence had got their evidence all in, then came the rebutting testimony of the other side. Abner was recalled; and Mrs. Pinworth was brought upon the stand to testify to Arlyn's mental state the evening before and the morning after the murder. Little was accomplished with these witnesses. It then became highly important to refute the evidence concerning the boots and the gold. The testimony of Madison, on which so much reliance had been

placed, required to be supported by a bold effort ; and the prosecution, after a whispered conference, resolved, that, all things considered, they ought to "risk the Arlyn girl." And Lucy's name was called in open court.

With a great bound of the heart, she heard. Every thing turned dark to her for a minute ; then a hand touched her arm.

"You will have to go. Be strong," said Jehiel.

He assisted her. She was conscious of rising in a sort of stupor, and of walking blindly where he led and her mechanically-moving feet carried her, but noted nothing distinctly till she found herself on the platform, seated, veiled, in a chair.

Then she knew what the noise was that sounded in her ears like the rushing of waters. It was the stirring of the multitude, — the human sea, upon which, like a weak weed, she was momentarily heaved and tossed.

All round, from floor to gallery, and from wall to wall, in windows and doors, and in spaces beyond windows and doors, heads upon heads, and faces beyond faces, was one vast staring, eager, tip-toe throng, devouring her with its thousand eyes.

"Will you please remove your veil?" said a voice.

She uncovered her face. A shadow and a hush fell instantly upon all that numerous assemblage. Especially those were touched — and they were many — who had known her in the bloom of her beauty, and now saw her first since the

change her sorrows had wrought. She looked like the disembodied spirit of herself, — lovely still, and all so white and thin, that even strangers, who had never seen her till then, were thrilled with pity and awe.

She did not look about her. She dared not see her father, whose irrepressible groan she heard. She *felt* Colonel Bannington's glittering eyes. One glimpse of Guy's anxious, melting look of love was all she could bear. Chancing then, she knew not why, to lift a glance to the gallery, she saw fixed upon her Christina's burning gaze. Still less did she know why, from that moment, strength flowed into her; or why, when the Book was given her to kiss, and the memory of the truth she must now speak came with a shock, she grew so calm and firm.

She was asked, did she know the prisoner?

"I do," she said; and her voice, though low, was so clear, that it was heard to the farthest part of the house.

Did she see him on the night of the murder? And she said, in the same silvery, distinct voice, —

"I cannot answer."

The attorney smiled persuasively, reminding her that she had taken an oath to utter the truth.

"Yes, sir, — the truth," she said, and drew a long breath.

"Then why cannot you answer?"

"Because" —

She paused, then lifted her eyes as if making a solemn

declaration to the world ; and her brow was pure and beautiful as she added, —

“ A wife cannot give evidence concerning her husband.”

The attorney smiled incredulously.

“ Do you mean to assert that you are the prisoner’s wife ? ”

“ I AM HIS LAWFUL WIFE.”

Guy dropped his face in his hands, and shook convulsively an instant ; then lifted it again, shining with joy and tears.

And now the spectators began to grasp the full significance of her words, — HIS WIFE ! They were buzzed from mouth to mouth. The sensations awakened by the beauty and distress of Lucy could no longer be repressed. The murmur began simultaneously in all parts of the house : it was taken up by the crowd without, and greeted with cheers ; and finally the entire multitude gave way to its enthusiasm in a burst of applause.

This noisy and irregular demonstration was quickly hushed ; not by the officers, who bestirred themselves in vain, but by an incident which changed the general joy and admiration back again to pity and suspense. Lucy had risen to hand a paper to the judge, — her marriage certificate. Then her strength failed her ; she reeled. With a cry, her father sprang forward, and she fell fainting in his arms.

L.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.



WHEN next Lucy opened her eyes, she was lying on a lounge in an office-room. Two or three women were attending her, and Mrs. Pinworth was sitting up stiff in a chair at her side.

That excellent female had nearly undergone petrification : she was almost a Niobe ; having, at one fell swoop of the avenging deities, lost a whole family of very dear expectations.

“ Father ! — where is he ? ” said Lucy, who had surely — or was it only a dream ? — felt herself in his arms a minute since.

At that the marble woman began to bend a little.

“ Are you better, my dear ? ” — and the stony hands smoothed Lucy’s forehead, and the striated countenance wrinkled itself into a smile. “ Why did you ever deceive your dear auntie, my child ? I have always loved you as my own daughter : don’t you know I have ? ”

“ I want my father ! ” exclaimed Lucy, trying to rise. “ Who took me away from him ? ”

“Your poor father is very much grieved and offended ; but I shall do all I can to have him reconciled to my dear niece ;” and the limestone lips actually kissed Lucy ! “You know how he hates the Banningtons ; but let us pray that he may be led to see the duty of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the great Christian virtue, my dear.” Pious Pinworth was herself again.

At that moment, Abner came rushing in, his capillary torch uncovered and wildly flaming.

“Something’s the matter with Sophy !” he gasped in the widow’s ear.

“Sophy ! Where is she ?”

“In the jailer’s house. Come quick !”

It was a distracting moment to the widow. She had hastened to take Lucy away from her father ; and it was her policy to keep them separated, at least until (if a reconciliation was inevitable) she could assume the *rôle* of a mediatrix between them. But Abner’s alarm, and perhaps her own suspicions of Sophy’s danger, dashed her purpose, and she fled in confusion.

Then Lucy, with tremulous faintness and longing, waited for her father. But he kept aloof. The parental impulse, with which he received her in his arms and bore her from the court-room, had been followed by a bitter revulsion. Mrs. Pinworth’s spirit still worked within him. Incessantly, during his sickness and convalescence, when he was weak and susceptible, she had been poisoning his mind against Lucy ;

and now all that he had been induced to believe of her un-dutifulness and deceit seemed confirmed. That she was not Guy's victim merely, but his wife by a private marriage, did not console him. She was guilty, not, as he had supposed, of a weakness which might be pardoned, but of a perversity of will which was unpardonable. She had married the son of his worst, his most malicious enemy, — a deliberate act. Then, for the meanest of all considerations, that of property, — the Bannington property even, — she had lived for a year a life of deception and disgrace.

So the old man, full of prejudice and passion, judging from appearances, but ignorant as a block of Luey's inner life, condemned her, and tortured himself, in his impetuous, violent way. He was walking to and fro by the court-house, grinding the gravel under his agitated feet, when he saw Abner come out of the jailer's house, after conducting his future mother-in-law into it. Immediately his great heart warmed towards Abner. He must have somebody to love and to benefit; and it was a relief to turn from his harsh thoughts of Luey to kind thoughts of his worthier relatives.

“Come here, Abner. I've been thinking what I shall do with that new house Pelt built with my money. How would *you* like that house when you're married?”

Abner writhed all over with an inane, bilious grin. He gasped, but did not speak.

“Why, Abner! are you sick?”

“Yes, I am some sick!”

“What’s the matter?” asked his sympathizing prospective uncle.

“I rather guess the excitement has been too much for Sophy! The truth is, — may as well say it, — Mrs. Pinworth’s a gran’mother by this time, or will be shortly.”

“Abner! — you don’t mean — Sophy!” —

“You can imagine my feelings!” said Abner. “I never suspected any thing; and we was to be married next week, you know! And we might have been, if it hadn’t been for to-day. Miss Arlyn, — I mean Mrs. Bannington, beg her pardon, — her coming out so handsomely in court seemed to hurry up the business. I must say,” added redhead, “it seems to me to be a judgment on mother and daughter for treating Mrs. Bannington so heartlessly.”

“Abner!” frowned the old man, “I thought better of you than that!”

“Mc!” Abner almost wriggled out of his sleeves, rubbing his freckled hands. “You don’t suppose I — good Heavens! I assure you I was strictly honorable. I was even *too* innocent. I have been duped in the most shameful way. And allow me to say, you have been duped too, Mr. Arlyn. They never meant you should make up with your excellent daughter; which I, being in the interest of the family, knew all about it. They came to the trial to-day, so as to keep you and Miss Lucy — beg her pardon, Mrs. Bannington — from seeing each other. There’s where the deccit has been! You was expected to settle a fortune on Sophy, when she got mar-

ried ; and after that I suppose they thought I could afford to play father to Mad Biddikin's baby ! ”

Stunned and staring, the old man stood and twisted his gray locks in his shaking fingers. Perhaps he was feeling to assure himself that the top of his head was safe, after the perfect flood of light that had been all at once poured in upon his great, stupid, startled brain.

While he stood thus, a cry reached his ears. He turned, and saw fluttering towards him Luey, with appealing countenance and outreaching hands. In an instant, Mrs. Pinworth, with all her evil counsel, was swept into oblivion.

“ Father ! dear father ! — love me ! forgive me ! ”

“ My child ! my child ! ” sobbed the old man.

And Luey was folded to his breast. After all her trials, she reposed on that tumultuous, fond heart.

Abner wriggled away.

Mr. Arlyn took Luey to a bench under a tree ; and there they sat breathing the blessed air of reconciliation, when he told her what had happened to her cousin.

“ Poor Sophy ! how I pity her ! ” exclaimed Luey, who had learned by fiery experience how to compassionate the woman whom the world condemns.

They had many things to say to each other which could not be said then and there ; and they arose to go. At the same time, Aaron and Jehiel carried a burden between them down the court-house steps. Luey recoiled, and clung to her father's arm. His honest, earnest face was working with

emotion as he looked on the wreck of him who had once been his friend. All melted and humbled, in that hour of love and forgiveness he could hold his resentment no longer. He advanced, leading Lucy, and stood face to face with his foe.

“George Bannington, I offer you my hand !”

The colonel looked up like a wounded snake from its coil, and answered nothing.

“I offer you my hand, and I beg your pardon. I remember that we were friends once, and that I have said and done many things in passion that I shouldn't ; and I humbly entreat your pardon.”

The invalid's eyes sparkled as he glanced from father to daughter ; but neither the tears and beauty of the one, nor the manly frankness and contrition of the other, appeared to touch him.

“Well, be it so !” And the old man withdrew the proffered hand, and laid it on his heart. “But it makes me ache here, George Bannington, to think that ever you and I should meet as we meet now. Life wasn't given us to be wasted in such misunderstandings and hatreds. I don't speak for the sake of property : I have enough for my daughter and me. All we want of you is your good will. We don't know how this trial will turn out : she may soon be a widow ; you may soon be a childless old man.”

The invalid's jaw worked silently, with some inward convulsion ; but still he refused the thrice-proffered hand.

“I didn't suppose any father could sit at his son's trial, as

you have to-day," said the old man solemnly, "and hear and see what you have heard and seen, without having his pride broke down. But I leave you to God and your own conscience. We have been in court together before, — too often. When we meet again, it may be at a different bar, and sooner than we think. George Bannington, good-by!"

The colonel, still speechless, gnawing his tongue, made an impatient movement; and Aaron wheeled him away.

"Jehiel," then said Mr. Arlyn, "you've done my daughter kindnesses we can never pay you for. But I want you to do one more. I've got a horse to the tavern: I wish you'd have him got out, and bring him here. I can't leave my child," he added with deep tenderness; "and she ain't well able to walk."

He took Lucy back to the bench, where they waited. It was now late in the afternoon. It was not necessary that they should remain longer in the village. They could not help Mrs. Pinworth in her trouble; and the trial was expected to continue the next day. Both longed to get away from the fever and excitement, of which the very atmosphere of the place seemed filled; and Lucy knew where she wished to be with her father then, — a quiet spot, where they could have solitude, communion, and rest.

Jehiel came with the horse. Arlyn gave him some money to give to Mrs. Pinworth; then helped Lucy into the wagon, and rode away with her into the broad, beautiful, cool green valley, by the river's banks.

They went where Lucy wished to go, and stopped at a familiar gate, which divides the busy world of the living from the tranquil place of the dead.

They entered with still feet. The air was full of freshness and fragrance, which the earth breathed forth after the storm. The robins were singing their evening song. The sunlight gilded the long grass. There were lambs feeding peacefully among the graves.

To a little hillock, under a mountain ash, they walked in silence. It was the first time the father of Lucy had visited the spot since his return. There was his wife's grave, over which the tears of past years had been shed; and he needed not to be told that the little mound by its side covered the ashes of the infant Agnes.

For a long time, without speaking, Lucy wept; not tears of the old, insupportable agony, but of relief and peace. Then she sat down, leaning upon her father's breast; and they talked of the days of their separation.

Soon the sexton, who had been digging in a remote corner of the grave-yard, passed that way.

"Another grave? Who now?" asked Mr. Arlyn.

"The last man ever I expected to make a grave for!" said the sexton, leaning on his spade. "'Twas generally supposed he would dry up and blow away. His brother from over the mountains came for him, to have him sent to an asylum; for he was crazy as a March hare. After hunting for him two days, they found him this morning in the woods.

He was lying across a bank, close by a hole that looked as if it had been freshly dug. There was a shovel by his side; and on his neck was a large pasteboard label, tied on with a string. The label had had printed on it with a pen the words, '*Not Guilty*;' but afterwards the *Not* had been scratched out. That, taken together with another circumstance, looks terrible mysterious. In the bottom of the hole, only half covered, was some human remains, — bones and so forth. Some of his neighbors thought, by his wearing that placard, that he was some way mixed up with the Pelt murder: but now it seems as though it had reference to these remains, which are supposed to belong to a boy that used to live with him; and it looks as if his conscience had troubled him about 'em, till he finally got crazy. It may be so," added the grave-digger: "all I know is, guilty, or not guilty, this is the last of Doctor Biddikin."

So saying, he shouldered his spade, and walked away.

"Another of the wretched is at rest, thank God!" said the old man. "What are you thinking, my daughter?" for her countenance was troubled.

"Of that boy's grave in the woods! It was true, then! And I have been to blame!"

"What do you mean?" asked the old man.

Then she told him how Guy and Christina had discovered Martin's grave, and learned the history of it; and how she, when the story was told her, had scoffed at it, believing it a trick, invented to deceive Guy.

“ Oh, if I had not been jealous, if I had not been prejudiced ! ” she exclaimed. “ If I had been willing to accept what was true, I might have saved him from what was false. But I lost my influence with him by my unreasonableness ; and so I lost him ! And if he is convicted, if he dies ! ” — She wrung her hands, and bent her head in anguish down over her baby’s grave.

“ My child ! — Lucy ! ” said her father, gently trying to lift her ; “ come ! ”

“ I won’t ask you to stay with me ; but let me stay ! ” she pleaded. “ Often I have longed to lie here all night, and be wet with the same dews that wet my baby’s grave. And now, if I could only wait here till the trial is over, and I know his fate ! But it is foolish. Yes, father : I will go. ”

She arose, supported by his arm. Then, when they had taken leave of the spot, and were turning to go, they looked, and lo ! a man stood before them, whose sudden apparition there astonished and thrilled Lucy, as if an angel of heaven had visibly descended and stood among the graves.

LI.

THE VERDICT.



MEANWHILE, at the court-house, surprising events had taken place.

The attempt, on the part of the prosecution, to introduce Luey's evidence, had been worse than a failure. It was one of those incidents which sometimes do more than testimony or argument to convince a jury. The sympathy in her behalf had been very great; and that, together with the revelation of the fact that the prisoner was not her seducer, but her husband, was sure to operate powerfully in his favor.

The government attorneys saw plainly the leak that was sinking their case, and judged it expedient to withdraw, in order to make repairs, and to return with less disadvantage to the battle the next morning.

But, before the court adjourned, they resolved to give the jury something strong to sleep on. Mad had borne his examination so well, that it could not be doubted but his straightforward swearing would be very useful in showing up what they termed Mr. Arlyn's "insane imaginings." Mad was accordingly recalled.

He stepped upon the stand with much of the same audacity he had at first exhibited, varied by a dash of sullen determination. Stoutly, and with round emphasis, he began to deny Mr. Arlyn's statements.

But now there appeared in the court-room a woman closely veiled, attracting much attention as she passed amidst the crowd, entered the precincts of the bar, and took a seat, which seemed to have been reserved for her, directly facing the witness. The heart of Guy swelled exultantly. But Mad's spirit went straightway out of him, and left him empty, when the veil was quietly laid aside, and he saw looking, with the old irresistible look, straight into his eyes, the eyes of Christina.

Pallor and confusion seized him. In vain Jinket frowned and shrugged. It was impossible for Mad to go on. His palsied tongue would not utter a word.

Twice or thrice, full of consternation and dumb fear, he turned his eyes about him, as if seeking for some relief, or chance of escape; but inevitably they came back, and rested — if such flickering frenzied glances could be said to rest — upon the pale, resolute, imperturbable, truth-compelling face of Christina.

At length, stung to desperation by the tongues of the lawyers, his voice burst hoarsely into an oath; and, springing from the platform, he made a dash at the nearest door.

Thanks to the district attorney, who desired that his witness should appear to the best advantage before the jury, no

manacles had been put upon him. His limbs were free. Fear, and the prospect of escape, inspired him. The officers were taken entirely by surprise. He tore through their hands without knowing that they touched him ; and the next instant he cleared the flight of steps, at the side entrance of the court-house, at a single leap.

“ Stop ! ” a voice shouted after him, “ or you are a dead man ! ”

Mad heeded the twittering of the swallows as much. He rushed towards the fields, with the woods and crags of Mount Solomon lifted high in sunshine before him, smiling calm invitation to his fiery soul. And he might have reached those fastnesses in spite of pursuers ; but a small pistol-crack succeeded the unheeded threat, — so very small and faint, that he scarcely heard it ; and a little missile of lead, traveling considerably faster than he, overtook him at the fence. He staggered, threw up his hands, clapped one of them on the back of his neck, turned square round, and fell.

Stunned and bleeding he lay there, until, reviving a little, he moved feebly under the hands of the physician who had come directly from Sophy and her babe to him, and, looking out from the darkness which had fallen upon his senses, saw a great crowd around him.

“ Am I killed ? ” he asked, rolling his bewildered eyes.

“ You have got your death-wound, I am sorry to say,” replied the sheriff. “ You remember what you promised, provided I wouldn’t put the irons on to you ; and what I promised in case you tried to get away.”

“Madison!” said another voice, which he knew, and which called up ghastly memories; and, through the shadow that was closing, he saw dimly the form of Christina kneeling. “Madison!” she repeated in a louder tone to rouse him, “you are going to die! Nothing can save you. Soon your soul will be in eternity. But don’t go with that awful sin upon it. Tell me instantly, who killed Mr. Pelt?”

“I killed him, — to be revenged!” answered the voice of the dying.

“Did any one help?”

“Yes; Murk was there: but we didn’t tell Guy.”

Christina would have had a magistrate brought to take the dying deposition of the murderer; but there was not time. And it was hardly necessary. Both the sheriff and the physician had distinctly heard the confession. And now the young man’s eyes were turned up in his head with the death-spasm.

The confession was conveyed to the district attorney as the court was on the point of adjourning. The learned gentleman became suddenly magnanimous. He rose, and proposed that the case should go at once to the jury without argument. The defence gladly assented. The judge did not consider a charge necessary; and the solemn twelve, without leaving their seats, announced their verdict, — “NOT GUILTY!”

Hence Lucy’s amazement there in the grave-yard. It was Guy himself who stood before her!

LII.

THE CACTUS BLOOMS.



IN the joy of the moment, all the darkness of doubt was banished as by a great light, an illumination that flooded her whole being; so that, had his wrongs towards her been a hundred-fold greater than they were, she would have forgotten them all in the rapture of their re-union.

His countenance was full of ineffable love and tenderness; and his voice was thick with crowding emotions, as he called her, —

“ My wife ! — my own wife ! ” — and clasped her to his heart.

Old Ben Arlyn choked and gasped, and brushed his eyes, and walked away to the gate where Jehiel stood by the panting and foaming horse that Guy had driven.

And now — after the first convulsion, in which the stream of their love, that had been so long, not dry, but dammed in its course, burst forth again — they talked together; and he told her how the day had been decided, and assured her, that,

until the morning after the murder, he was even ignorant that it had been committed.

“Do you think, if I had known of it, I would have left the gold with you in that careless way?” he asked.

“Why, then, didn’t you declare the simple truth?” said Lucy.

“Because the law will not accept the simple truth. There were circumstances which placed me in jeopardy. I did not intend that any serious harm should happen to Pelt. I did not know which road he would return by, but thought it most probable he would take the south road. So I went myself, alone, to wait for him there; and there I waited till Murk and Madison brought me the gold. Murk said they had done only ‘what was necessary,’ and let Pelt go. The pistol I had not even seen; but, though I had no suspicion of the murder, I felt a strong presentiment of trouble. And when, the next morning, I heard what had happened, I knew that, if they had done the deed, and it was proved, together with my action in the matter, the law would regard me as an accessory both before and after the fact, and hold me subject to the same penalty as if I had been really the principal criminal. So I took counsel, and determined to use the law to defend myself against the law. I know how you got rid of the gold, Lucy; and I have you to thank for saving my life; though the boots I gave Archy came very near turning traitors against me!”

“We have escaped great perils!” said Lucy. “I trem-

ble to think of them! Are they all passed, do you think, Guy?" For now came up thoughts of Christina, of his father, of their future.

He answered all her doubts. He had spoken with Christina a moment after the trial, and she had bidden him farewell.

"She did you a great service at last!" said Luey gratefully.

"Yes; and she has done more for me than that," replied Guy, "as you will learn some day."

"O Guy!" said she penitently, "I am not willing to separate you from any of your friends. I have not trusted you as I should, — as I can trust you now."

"The friends you have distrusted — they have fulfilled their use, a great use to me!" he exclaimed. "Heaven has been kind to me. I have not been a fanatic for nothing!" he added with a smile of wonderful meaning.

Luey saw the radiance, and felt in her own heart a strange consciousness of blessedness; and she knew then that all had been wisely ordered, and that all was well.

"As for my father," said Guy, "I consider the inheritance fairly forfeited by the miserable deception I have been guilty of; and if it should fall to us now, Luey, it will be ours only for the good we can do with it, — ours to hold in trust for the poor. But, for his own sake, I hope he will forgive me and love you."

"We cannot be fully happy, and how can he have peace, without a reconciliation?" said Luey. "Ho cannot help rejoicing that you are acquitted."

“ He does not know it yet. I wish we could carry him the news : I am sure his heart would be softened then.”

“ Yes : we will go. But, Guy, I have not shown you ” —

And tremblingly, with hushed lips, she led him to their baby’s grave. He knelt down. They knelt together, and wept.

“ My precious Agnes !—she is with the angels ! But God has left us each other ; and love is not lost, Luey. The dear ties we think broken, they are not destroyed ; but Christ takes them all in his hand, and holds them for us, and draws us by them up to him.”

They had risen to depart, when Archy Brandle, with a pair of innocent old shoes on his feet, coming into the village to get news of the trial, stopped at the gate where Jehiel and Mr. Arlyn were waiting, and saw Luey and Guy with his astonished eyes, and heard the story of the verdict with his astonished ears.

“ And I ain’t so crazy, my boy,” cried Mr. Arlyn, “ but that I remember who was our friends when we needed friends. You and your mother were kind to me : but, more than that, you were angels to my poor child ; and here she is to thank you.”

The angel in old shoes, confounded and overwhelmed very much as if he had been a mere mortal, turned, and blushed, and grew pale, as he saw Luey affectionately reaching out her hand to him.

“No, Archy; I can never thank you: but I shall try to be as kind to others who need kindness as you and your mother have been to me. This is my husband, — MY INNOCENT HUSBAND, — Archy.”

“Then I am glad!” he exclaimed, brightening, the real angel shining through his awkwardness. “I’m as glad as I can be!” — with a gush of honest tears.

Guy, touched with admiration and affection, held out his hand to the faithful and generous youth.

“You and I will be better friends than we have been yet, Archy,” he said.

“I shall like you if you are good to her,” Archy replied.

“Oh, then you will worship me!” said Guy.

“Go home with Jehiel,” then said Luey to her father.

“We will be there soon. We have first a duty to do.”

And the group separated, and Archy was left standing alone; and as he watched Guy and Luey riding away in the sunset light, so young, so beautiful, so beloved of each other, it must be owned that his lonely heart gave one great heave of grief; then it was still, and sweet peace flowed into it; and the joy which neither wit nor good fortune can bring their possessor, which can only be his who serves faithfully and loves unselfishly, went home that night with Archy, walking at his side like a heavenly companion.

Guy and Luey rode through the village. The story of their marriage had preceded them. Marvellous was the sensation, and wonderful the buzzing of gossips. “Did you

ever hear any thing so romantic?" — "No, I never! Mrs. Guy Bannington! — only think of it! Well, I always knew she was a girl above the common. More character than fifty like that — Of course you have heard about Sophy Pinworth? What a shame! What will her mother say now, I wonder? Well, I always knew" —

And so forth, and so forth. For this world of gossip is a curious world; a chattering idiot, his back turned upon the realities of things, viewing the solemn procession of life's changes in a flawed mirror, making his own coarse traits the largest part of the picture, and sapiently commenting.

Sweetly unconscious of the figure they made in that fantastic glass, Guy and Luey rode on. An atmosphere of love and peace wrapped them in its halo. Under the trees and the soft sky lay the cool tranquil pond as they passed, with far-off sunset mountains in its depths; and like the transparent water seemed their souls, full of the beauty of earth and the purity of heaven.

As they rode, a vision of future days floated before them, — a vision of happy labor, of high uses, of wedded blessedness, and dear parental cares; charity no idle phrase with them, but an essence flowing out from their daily lives; reform no vague or fine-spun theory, but first a reality in themselves, and thence proceeding outward, a power in the world.

And so they reached Guy's father's house. Descending at the door, they were met and cordially welcomed by Rhoda.

They inquired for the colonel. She pointed to the library, whispering, —

“He came home dreadfully excited. He sent Aaron off for Squire Wells : something about altering his will, Aaron said.”

“Tell him we have come to see him,” said Guy, drawing the timid Lucy to his side.

“He told me not to disturb him, or let any one see him till they came back,” replied Rhoda. “But of course you can do as you please.”

Guy softly opened the door. There sat the colonel in his chair, with his head on his breast, — as he often sat, when his troubles were heavy.

“Come, Lucy! — courage! The first thing he sees, when he looks up, should be your face!” And well might Guy think that the tender radiance of her sweet, sad, hopeful expression would touch his father’s heart.

They entered with noiseless steps on the thick carpet. The colonel, wearied, had fallen asleep. He did not look up or stir. A peculiar chilliness and gloom pervaded the library. Dimly from her picture, Guy’s mother looked down upon the scene.

“Father!” said Guy, kneeling with Lucy.

No response; and somehow his own voice startled him, breaking the ominous hush.

“Father!” he repeated, looking up in the still face, whose pallor appalled him. “FATHER!” And he took hold of the sleeper’s hands.

They were tightly clinched, and damp with the clamminess of death.

At that moment, Lucy, with shuddering awe, saw a man standing behind the corpse. It was Guy's father; not he whose rigid members sat up there in hideous mockery of life, but the same of other days, — her father's friend, ever kind to her, and looking kindly upon her now with a forgiving smile. In an instant the image vanished; and she told Guy.

“It is a good omen!” he said.

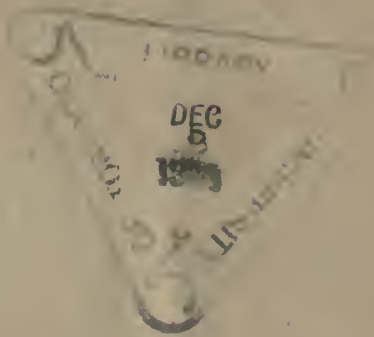
And, kneeling still, he prayed with his whole heart:—

“O Lord of life! guide us in the way of thy law; hold us in the bosom of thy love!”

And, when he had prayed, he lifted Lucy up; and, turning to the window, he showed her, flaming between them and the sunset sky, two full-blown cactus-flowers.

“One for my father,” he said, “and one for me.”

THE END.



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